DOCTORAL THESIS

Finding Their Dance

A study of the narratives and claims of alterations of belief systems amongst non-professional dancers

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Abstract

In the history of dance research, social and recreational dance and dancers have often occupied a lesser status within the field and within the dance canon. Thus, the voices of non-professional or amateur dancers are less represented, and have received limited recognition for their contribution. This thesis focuses on the stories of such individuals whose dance experiences are outside of professional training or 'art' dance circumstances. It examines their narratives, to illustrate and illuminate the perceptions of and perspectives about dance and dancers, and the place dance holds within a larger social context.

The central focus of the thesis is the claims by individuals who believe their adult lives have been significantly impacted or transformed by their interactions with dancing and dance events. Many of those interviewed stated that their relationship or association to dance practice in childhood and adolescence was limited or non-existent, and included views that were rooted in either negative or preconceived perceptions. Thus, their constructed belief systems about dance and dancers were based upon personal or social interactions or influences. Through a meeting or encounter with dance in adulthood, these convictions were altered, and dance became a prominent activity in their lives; so much so, that it influenced aspects of their identity, social groups, and professional occupations.

Transformative learning theory serves as the primary lens through which the stories are examined, and offers an approach that is unique to adult learning and experience. Working from a constructivist perspective, the theory posits

that knowledge and belief systems are accumulated throughout a person's life, resulting in defined 'points of view' and fixed 'habits of mind' (Mezirow 1991). At times experiences emerge that confront this knowledge in such a way that the prior views are called into question, resulting in an altered perspective. Other contributing approaches include peak experience (Maslow 1943), and flow (Csíkszentmihályi 1998) which work together to analyse the participants' voices in such a way that their stories of significance experiences and knowledge are highlighted.

What the narratives provide are insights into the development of belief systems about dance/dancing/dancers, many of which evolved from social expectations, or unexpected encounters with people and/or events. What is unique is their individual viewpoints and commentary on the subject, that, when analysed, develop into larger patterns for analysis. As such, what is contributed is a greater understanding of the role dance plays in the lives of non-professional dancers

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Acknowledgements

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Transcriptions and Referencing

There is a delicate balance between the representation of the subject and the needs of the research, with the constant awareness that no matter how transparent the researcher tries to be, each story 'represents a different sort of re-creation – the author's own creation – of the original story' (Bennett 1999: 186). For the purposes of this research, ethnographic writing and narrative transcription are combined to bring focus to the material, and support a data driven investigation and analysis. Therefore, after each interview a thorough summary was created outlining the story told by the participant, including details of the interview, as well as my personal reflections. These summaries were further developed, and an interwoven dialogue with the literal transcriptions was created. This was done with the goal to 'reflectively decide on what aspects of narrative data to respond to' (Josselson 1995:36) as well as highlight specific patterns and data related to the aims and research questions, without excluding portions of the story that provided grounding details (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 148). Even though the summaries are a representation of parts of their narrative, they follow the details of the story as closely as possible with careful attention paid to representation; with an awareness that as the researcher, it is my voice combined with theirs, and there is a possibility of 'a residue of ambiguity' (Fontana and Frey 2000: 645) in the portrayal of each participant.

Where the participant's dialogue is inserted, it is transcribed in a way that matches their spoken language, with the exclusion of pause fillers such as "um", "you know", "er", etc. These have been removed and replaced with

ellipses (…) for the focus to remain on the dialogue that is topically relevant. The use and patterns of speech have not been altered in any way to reflect a more grammatically correct dialogue, the sentence structure and spelling of words is as it was spoken during the interview. When I felt that a word was implied or was needed to bring additional clarity to the narrative, it was included and placed in brackets [ ]. Every effort possible was made to judge the beginnings and endings of sentences to best present the transcribed narratives in the way they were given for this research.

Throughout the thesis, direct quotes from the participants are in italics. They are accompanied by their pseudonym, age, place of residence, and country of birth, if different, all of which serve as a direct reference. All additional information relevant to the participants and interview, such as dates, location, and format, can be found in appendix G.

Introduction

This research presents the stories of thirty-eight individuals who claim that their discovery and subsequent participation in dance activities as an adult, has had a transformative effect on their lives. Most did not train as dancers in childhood or adolescence, and experienced a later in life introduction. As such, their belief systems about, and relationship with dance and dancing have undergone a notable shift from something that was thought to be inaccessible, even evoking feelings of apprehension or fear. Although the physical act of dancing is alleged by the participants to be the primary reason behind their changed perspective and life alterations, the data reveals that social and community based aspects also play a vital role towards this realisation. When the total components of the experience are taken into account, there is produced what one participant described as, '*a love affair*' with dance, meaning that it has taken hold to an extent where life cannot be imagined without it. For example, the response from research participant Nora when visiting a doctor about a recent injury and the possible compromise to her dancing,

Nora, 29: UK

It would absolutely devastate me. Absolutely devastate me. I just – I can't imagine what my life would be without it all. And even now, I find it very very difficult when I have to take time off… I genuinely can't imagine if somebody told me 'Ok, you'll never dance again'. It would kill me. I got an interview recently...and when I was getting my first initial assessment with the physio, he said to me, 'what worries you?' and I couldn't not cry and burst into tears and said, 'I'm really worried that I can't dance anymore'. And he was like, 'Please don't get upset, that's not going to happen. That's why you are here, and we'll fix you'...And I think it's moments like that that make you realise how important it [dance] *is, in your life. It is my life.*

Therefore, while recognising that there are physical and health benefits related to dancing (see Hanna 1988, 2006, Quiroga Murcia et. al 2010, Weinstein 2012, Lovatt 2013), this research focuses on the aspects that are outside of these perspectives, and will primarily consider that which is connected to the social, emotional, and personal, and how these are expressed. No matter the circumstance, each of the participants offers a unique interpretation of the ways and reasons she/he feels, dance and dancing has impacted her/his life.

What these stories reflect are not only the power of dance and dance communities, but the recognition that they exist and play an important role in the lives of people who are not professional dancers. These voices offer an expanded perspective and awareness of the "dance world", which occurs outside of professional training and proscenium performances. For the purposes of this research therefore, the emphasis is on the experience of transformative learning and the development and alteration of systems of belief, in regards to childhood, adolescent, and adult dance experiences.

ii. Starting Points: Niemenen and Finnegan

Two individuals that were influential to this research were dance scholar Pipsa Nieminen and anthropologist Ruth Finnegan. Their contributions, which focus on the importance of the equal representation of non-professionals in the arts (music/dance), provided information and inspiration throughout the entire research process. In her unpublished thesis titled *Four Dance Subcultures: A Study of Non-professional Dancers' Socialisation, Participation Motives, Attitudes and Stereotypes* (1998), Nieminen investigates the personal and social influences that motivates individuals towards engagement in dance

classes. Comparing her research to models[1] created to investigate sports socialisation, she navigates and shapes her study in such a way that it opens new ways of considering non-professional dance and dancers. Focusing on four dance styles – ballet, folk dance, competitive ballroom, and modern dance – she poses questions aimed at not only the investigation motivational factors, but also the attitudes and stereotypes that accompany the reasoning for or against participation. Although her work centres on individuals between the ages of eleven and sixteen, in a related article[2] that expands upon her original research, she includes a section that refers to adult dancers whose participation is described as 'Late-Starting, High intensity Dance Participation' (Nieminen 1997:228). This title was my first introduction to writing by another scholar that describes the types of individuals profiled in my study. The dancers that fall within the above-mentioned category are people who discover dancing as adults, become very active and passionate, and integrate it into their lives so that it takes up a substantial portion of their time.[3] Both Nieminen's and my groups fall along the same spectrum of racial and socio-economic backgrounds, and a few described similar motivational factors for beginning to dance. However, despite their similarities, the two studies diverge in their overall goals – mine continuing the trajectory of profiling specifically adult dancers and a variety of dance styles, and hers looking at a broad range of ages and only four dance forms. What Nieminen's early work provided was a starting place of insight into scholarly research related to the motivations, insights, and attitudes of non-professional dancers. Most

[1] Neal, P. (1972), Snyder, E. E. & Spreitzer, E. (1983), Washburn, R. A. & Montoye, H. J. (1986).
[2] Nieminen, Pipsa (1997) *Participation Profiles and Socialisation into Dance Among Non-Professional Dancers*, Sport, Education and Society, (Accessed 22 October, 2014).
[3] Although this description also corresponds to Stebbin's concept of serious leisure, discussed further in Chapter two, Nieminen's title perfectly presents the types of dancers profiled in my research.

importantly, she treats her subjects and their dance participation with equal importance to those given to professional dancers, and acknowledges that the information they provide needs to sit amongst other types of dance scholarship.

In her book, *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town* (1989), Finnegan profiles the lives, experiences, and contributions of amateur musicians in the town of Milton Keynes, a post war "new town"[4] not far from London, UK. Her research is valuable to this project in many ways, but it was the focus on the importance of studying the roles and contributions of non-professional musicians that captured my interest. She says,

> It is easy to underestimate these grass-roots musical activities given the accepted emphasis in academic and political circles on great musical masterpieces, or famed musical achievements. But for the great majority of people it is the local amateur scene that forms the setting for their active musical experience, and it is these 'ordinary' musicians and their activity that form the centre-piece of this study…It is also based on my conviction that amateur practitioners are just as worth investigation as professional performers, and that their cultural practices are as real and interesting as the economic or class facets of their lives to which so much attention is usually devoted…I hope it can lead to greater appreciation and study of what are, after all, among the most valued pursuits of our culture: the musical practices and experiences of ordinary people in their own locality, and invisible system which we take for granted but which upholds one vulnerable but living element of our cultural heritage.
>
> (Finnegan 1989: xii)

[4] Milton Keynes is a planned community in South East England that was expanded in the late 1960s to 'relieve some of the housing pressure in London'. http://www.mkinspire.org.uk/: (Accessed 9 February, 2017)

What Finnegan eloquently describes in this excerpt from her preface, aptly reflects the importance and inclusion of investigating the lives of non-professional dancers. Not only do they represent a large portion of the dancing population, they provide important information about social and cultural interests, opinions, tastes, and views in regards to dance events and activities as well as other forms of participation in the arts (Lawson 2009).

As is reflected in the title of the book, Finnegan uses the metaphor of being 'hidden' to describe the place that these types of musicians occupy in realms both social and intellectual. In essence, they are both hidden and yet in plain sight; there is an awareness of their existence, but they are often relegated to places that are deemed of lesser importance than those who are paid professionals in their chosen fields. Although Finnegan's research focuses on musicians, and mine on dancers, this work is an important statement on the issue of social perception and value in the arts from an anthropological perspective. Its thorough investigation and presentation of this topic from a myriad of angles provided a continuing stream of questions and discoveries that will take longer to unpack than in this investigation.

What the work of both Nieminen and Finnegan offered were starting points from which I began to evaluate the issues of representation of non-professionals in dance. Their work presents important assessments which point to a general lack of status both towards and within amateur arts groups, as well as larger social and cultural ideologies. There is a notion that was often repeated amongst my participants, that only those who occupied a professional position were "real" dancers, while those who had not achieved this level did not deserve to claim such a title. This myth of authenticity is

representative of socially constructed perceptions about dance and dancing, and creates divisions and categorisations that produce effects far greater than simply being a participant - it reaches beyond the individual, influencing belief systems about dance and dancers. Such myths were highly influential and consequential in the stories of the participants, producing feelings of discomfort, shame, and even fear towards what should be a naturally occurring embodied practice (Hanna 1987, Barbour 2011). These experiences are at the core of this research, which seeks to uncover both the how and why such belief systems are formed and eventually altered.

iii. A Case for Social and Popular Dance

Similar to Finnegan's position about research focusing on amateur musicians, are those who feel that social and popular dance also deserve increased scholarly recognition. Within the history of dance research, these styles have also often garnered less consideration amongst dance scholars and within higher education curricula. Although present within dance research, social and popular dance have historically occupied what seem to be the smaller (but no less important) areas of investigation related to dance and sociology, anthropology and ethnography (Malnig 2008).[5] Dance historian and ethnographer Theresa Buckland describes social dance as the 'Cinderella of dance studies' (Buckland 2011: 13). She also observes,

[5] I say that these genres within the field of dance are 'smaller' because they are less available as choices of study within dance research programmes in higher education. In the United States, there is no specific degree programme for dance and anthropology, and there is one programme at the University of Roehampton in the UK. This type of thinking is more prevalent within the UK and neighbouring European countries, as can be demonstrated by the membership of organisations such as the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology. I do not mean to negate in any way the research that has taken place in the fields of dance anthropology and ethnography, and sociology. Quite the contrary. It is the work of such scholars as Andrée Grau, Teresa Buckland, Ann David, Yolanda van Ede, Sherril Dodds, Jane Desmond, and Helen Thomas, to name a few, that have inspired me in moving forward with this type of research in dance, and where I see both a rich history, as well as current growth and expansion in interest in the experiences of non-professional dance and dancers.

> It has frequently been assigned to the categories of folk dance or historical dance, neither of which has featured strongly in Anglo-American dance discourse. The reasons for this neglect can partially be located in conceptualisations of dancing that draw upon European distinctions between the reams of the artistic and the social, the professional and the amateur; distinctions that can be traced back at least to the European courts of the late seventeenth century when dancing as a theatricalized form, performed by professionals, emerged as a discrete practice.
>
> (Buckland 2011: 13)

Dance scholar Sherril Dodds concurs with this when she states, 'Since the explosion of social dance forms at the start of the twentieth century, popular dance has traditionally been awarded low measures of social and intellectual merit' (Dodds 2011: 200). As such, within the larger dance canon they retain as Dodds contends, a status of being less important or worthy of research, citing 'relativist privileging' (ibid: 200). She goes on to attribute this lack of scholarly enquiry in part, to the higher or lower placement of value or worth on these types of dance. For example, the forms of art dance[6] that exist on the stage are thought to occupy a higher level of importance or status, while social dance is thought to be that which belongs to the ordinary and everyday (Ward 1993, Sparshott 1995, Lawson 2009). It is its perceived accessibility that acts as its detriment, lessoning its interest to scholarly research. Dance scholar Julie Malnig echoes these opinions when she refers to the study of popular dance as, 'a kind of poor relation within the scholarly hierarchy' (Malnig 2008: 1), but suggests (as does Dodds) that a change is taking place. This was first evidenced by texts such as Helen Thomas's edited collection *Dance in the City* (1997) which profiles dance and its presence in and to

[6] Art or concert dance referring to dance styles that are generally performed on a proscenium stage in front of an audience. Forms of dance included under this heading would be ballet, modern/contemporary, theatre dance forms, etc. (Thomas 1997, Carter 2010)

urban landscapes. It is unique in its presentation of styles that range from tea dances to striptease, yet follows a continuous thread of how dance situates itself in and around modern society. Eleven years later, Julie Malnig's *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (2008), was another noteworthy contribution, offering a collection focusing on the history of social and popular dance. Featuring a global perspective on the topic, it presents a detailed cross section of subjects and styles that are discussed using a variety of theoretical methodologies. More recently, Sherrill Dodd's *Dancing on the Cannon: Embodiments of Values in Popular Dance* (2011) offers a critical point of view on social and popular dance. Looking at the subject through the lens of value perceptions, Dodds questions and examines the judgement of dance styles that are often considered to be on the fringes of social propriety. Joanna Bosse's *Becoming Beautiful: Ballroom Dance in the American Heartland* (2015) features an in-depth investigation into amateur ballroom dance in the American mid-west. Using personal narratives as the foundation for her research, she explores the genre from the specific dance styles it encompasses, to the notions of fantasy and identity alteration. In addition to these texts are the establishment of the international organisations such as Pop Moves, begun in the UK in 2007,[7] and the Society for Dance History Scholars (SDHS) Popular, Social and Vernacular Dance Working Group established in 2012,[8] both of whose focus prioritises dance in social and popular culture.

[7] https://popmoves.com: (Accessed 12 January, 2017)

[8] https://sdhs.org/working-groups/popular-social-and-vernacular: (Accessed 12 January, 2017)

A parallel movement gaining popularity is the inclusion of non-professional dancers in professional dance productions. The most noted in recent years is the work of French choreographer Jérôme Bel, who both incorporates and places an emphasis on utilising amateur and professional dancers. His productions *The Show Must Go On* (2001), and *Gala* (2015) are representations of this interest, and it is the mixture of abilities on-stage that both attracts and intrigues audiences. In a 2016 review of *Gala*, The Guardian dance critic Judith Mackrell writes,

> There is a masterful range of styles and skills to be seen on the dance stage today. Yet the French choreographer Jérôme Bel can open our eyes, and our hearts, to a completely different spectrum – a spectrum that embraces all the ways that ordinary people can dance, and all the ways that dancing can make them feel.
>
> (Mackrell 2016)[9]

Mackrell goes on to write that what makes this piece, and others by Bel, accessible and enjoyed are the connections made to one or more of the dancers. Through identifying with someone on stage who is 'like me', Bel, amongst others,[10] manages to eliminate the invisible fourth wall that separates audience and performers, and for a moment breaks through the perceived hierarchical structure of professional dance.

Mainstream television programs such as *Strictly Come Dancing: The People's Strictly* (2014), and *Our Dancing Town* (2016)[11] are also bringing the notion of

[9] https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/oct/19/jerome-bel-gala-review-sadlers-wells - The Guardian June 19, 2016: (Accessed May 23, 2017)

[10] Other choreographers such as Nicola Conibere, Liz Lerman, and Bill T Jones, (to name a few) have included non-professional dancers in their choreographic works, or cited their participation as inspiration.

[11] The *People's Strictly* (2014) was a special version of the popular television series *Strictly Come Dancing*, where members of the community (as opposed to celebrities) were nominated to participate. The four-episode series was broadcast as a part of the fund-raising efforts for *Red Nose Day for Cancer Research*. *Our Dancing Town* (2017) features choreographer Steve Elias, and profiles different communities who he is tasked to bring together through learning a choreographed dance.

amateur adult dancers to the public's attention. Although built upon existing concepts featuring non-professionals, what they represent and bring to the forefront is an interest in dancers that are "other" than those who have been trained within a professional context. The first two programs were mentioned on several occasions by those whom I interviewed and their comments ranged from being inspired, to admiring the risks being taken by the non-professional dancers; a form of "if they can do it so can I". Although it never served as a primary reason for beginning to dance, it was noticed and noted as something that brought an awareness of the dancing as a possibility that had not existed before.

What these brief examples show is emerging evidence that a movement towards the inclusion of amateur and social dancers is beginning to take place within dance scholarship and performance. However, within dance archives, specifically those dedicated to oral history, the voices and representations of non-professional dancers remain a lesser priority.

iv. Oral history collections

Oral history collections provide an important archival resource for dance research. The audio and video interviews of individuals involved with dance and dancing offers investigators unique access to first-hand memories and stories. Although limited, such compilations currently do exist in the archives of dance companies, within public and private libraries, and within universities. The largest accumulation of interviews resides in the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York City Public Library (NYPL). Begun in 1974, their Oral History Project dedicated to dance lists as its criteria for participation,

> …the individual's significance to the dance community eithr because of their own work, or because of the proximity of their relationship to an identified subject of interest. A notable achievement or turning point in an individual's life or the history of an institution is one factor that might cause a subject to be recommended for oral history documentation. Another important criteria for participation is that the subject matter is at risk in some way due to: age or illness, diminishing participation in a form, archival silences, limited access to media.[12]

Although it does include contributions profiling individuals who are considered to be master artists from around the globe, the bulk of the collection features dancers and choreographers that reflect art or concert dance from a Western perspective. The NYPL oral history collections dedicated to dance are divided into three primary areas: a general dance archive, a special project focusing on dancers with HIV or AIDS, and a third collection called *Speaking of Dance*. The latter is a specially funded project aimed at identifying, 'ten prominent figures in the field [of dance] unified by a focus on the role of interpretation of dancing'.[13] Each of the individuals profiled represents professional ballet or contemporary dancers, choreographers, as well as a prominent dance critic[14] who were specifically chosen by a committee for inclusion.

While on one hand, the NYPL should be commended for dedicating resources for the preservation of the voices of dancers, my concern is that the collection is limited in its representation. In a blog post, titled,

[12] https://www.nypl.org/oral-history-project-dance – (Accessed 17 November, 2016)
[13] http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/dance-oral-history-project#/?tab=about – (Accessed 17 November, 2016)
[14] Those included in the project are Karole Armitage, Karin van Aroldingen, Carolyn Brown, Holly Hynes, Julie Kent, Alastair Macaulay, Kevin McKenzie, Lupe Serrano, Ethan Steifel, and Wendy Whelan.

Recording the Life of a Dancer (2013), Susan Kraft,[15] the former curator of the dance and oral history collection for the NYPL, says,

> I have had the honour of developing and safeguarding the work of the Dance Oral History Archive and Project for almost twenty years. Part of my role is not only deciding who the project records, but how. To this end the interviewer and I look at what areas of the subject's career might lack documentation and, more generally, what would be the most effective strategy to develop a useful interview for future generations of scholars. Because we believe that dance oral histories are a unique opportunity to explore the relationship between the artist, their art, and the world in which they live…

I have no doubt that Ms. Kraft and her colleagues are sincere in their dedication to representing the voices of dancers whom they feel contribute to the field of dance; the way they negotiate with dancers as to what they want documented is laudable. Their choice of who is represented in their collection, however, seems to set a tone that only certain types of dancers and dance genres should receive attention and preservation. This quote also points to the fact that there is a small number of people who are making decisions about what might be important to the future of dance research. As shown by Thomas, Dodds, and Malnig (amongst others), interest towards non-professional dance is gaining momentum, and as such, might be important for inclusion in years to come.

Other similar collections dedicated to oral history and dance revealed either comparable qualifications,[16] or inclusions. Such institutions as the

[15] https://www.nypl.org/oral-history-project-dance – (Accessed 17 November, 2016) - Over the course of my research I contacted Susan Kraft or her colleagues on several occasions, but never received a response.

[16] I am including institutions in this list that are outside of professional dance companies and schools that have created their own oral history collections showcasing their current and former dancers. Some of these include the New York City Ballet (USA), the Royal Ballet (UK), Rambert Dance Company (UK), the Royal Academy of Dance (UK), San Francisco Ballet (USA) to name a few.

Black Dance Archive (UK) founded in 2015, include an oral history collection to capture the voices of historically significant black British dancers. In the Columbia University (USA) archive, dancers and choreographers who attended the Bennington College summer dance programmes are featured. Leeds University (UK) has in its archive oral history recordings of individuals who worked with and were taught by dance theorist Rudolf Laban. The Museum of Performance and Design (USA) in San Francisco holds a collection of interviews called *The Legacy Project*, dedicated to those who are important 'knowledge holders and creative bearers'[17] about dance and performance. The collection was originally begun in 1988 to document the lives of dancers who were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Featured in the National Library of Australia (AUS) is the *Keep on Dancing Oral History Project.*[18] Begun in 1997, it features the stories of prominent Australian ballet and contemporary dancers. The Oral History Dance Collection at the University of Victoria (Canada) was founded in 2011 and collects oral histories and 'is intended to provide an opportunity for dance professionals to reflect on their work as well as the role of the artist within society'.[19] University of California Los Angeles Library (USA) has in its archive nine interviews of early American dance pioneers such as Alma Hawkins, Bella Lewitzky, and Ruth St. Denis. The American Dance Festival (USA), and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (USA) both contain large collections of interviews with professional dancers and

[17] https://lohpdigitalarchive.omeka.net/about: (Accessed 17 November, 2016)
[18] http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/3920202: (Accessed 19 November, 2016)
[19] https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/4327

choreographers who are participants and contribute to the historical documentation of the organization. What this small list of dance collections share and feature are the voices of primarily theatre dance practitioners[20] who, by inclusion in these archives are given an elevated place or status in the field.

Where then can the voices of non-professional dancers be heard? Other research I conducted found mentions of dance outside of the professional dance communities within collections that were either 1) folklore related, or 2) reference dance and dancing within archives that were not specifically about dance or within dance studies. For example, when searching the collected oral histories of World War II veterans housed in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. (USA), stories of social dancing are included as a part of the areas dedicated to war-time social activities.[21] The Eastern Kentucky Folk Dance Oral History Project, in partnership with Berea College, includes a study of Square Dance History in their collection.[22] A study (and later publication) by James Nott in the history department at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland titled, *Going to the Palais: a Social and Cultural History of the Dance Hall in Britain, c.1918 – 60 (2015)*[23] , serves as an oral history example of social and popular dancers, but the research was conducted and is housed within a history department.

[20] The majority of the individuals featured in these collections are based in Western theatre dance, however there are also dancers and choreographers from other countries who are considered to be significant artists in their fields.
[21] Library of Congress WWII collection - https://www.loc.gov/vets/: (19 November, 2016)
[22] http://squaredancehistory.org/items/show/1588: (19 November, 2016)
[23] http://st-andrews.ac.uk/history/dancehalls - Later published under the same title (Nott, J. 2015).

During the course of this research I had the opportunity to speak with British oral historian Paul Thompson who, amongst his accomplishments, was a contributing founder of the National Sound Archive at the British Library. When asked about his knowledge of possible oral history collections that profiled dance and dancers, he responded that in the planning of the British Library collection, they thought to include music, drama, and visual artists but to his knowledge there was very little on dance.[24] He suggested that I look at other types of collections where stories of dance might be included, thus confirming some of my earlier findings. A similar conversation was also had with Rob Perks,[25] the lead curator of the National Life Stories project at the British Library. Both interactions concluded with laughter and the wondering as to why dance had been overlooked, as well as the suggestion from them that it be considered for future inclusion.

Mentioned here are a small number of collections and a sample of studies, but it is through their example that I again recognise the non-professional dancer as hidden or 'invisible' (Ward 1997:8), but also within plain sight. There *are* interviews that exist profiling social and popular dance forms, but their placement is related more to the cultural topic to which they are linked, rather than as a representation of dance for dance sake. Returning to the quote above from the NYCPL which uses the phrase 'significance to the dance community' as the means for

[24] Personal conversation with Paul Thompson April 19, 2015
Within the British Library section titled Oral Histories of Performing Arts and Music (http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/oral-histories-of-performing-arts-and-music - Accessed 26/1/2017), there resides some interviews with and about dance in the Royal Opera House collection, as well as an interview with ballet dancer Dame Adeline Genée. Both are classified under the heading of *Music*.
[25] Personal conversation with Rob Perks, 7 July, 2016

qualification in their collection, the following questions are posed - on whose authority are these choices being made, and why do non-professional dancers fall into the category of being non-significant? The response to these are a partial purpose of this thesis, but what they suggest are those who are amateur participants still occupy a place of the 'poor relation' (Hennion 1996: 116), instead of 'one laden with power and possibility' (Fox 2004: 5) in the realm of dance archives and research.

At the heart of the stories of the participants is the claim that dance and dancing has played a meaningful role in altering their lives. How then should the notion of "significance" be ascertained? Or should they even be placed side by side? They are essentially two sides of the same dance coin that occupy common goals and attributes, and should be treated as such. Oral historian and dance scholar Jeff Friedman says, 'for our interests as a dance community, the alternative narratives of non-elites often represent historical subjects marked by embodied difference' (Friedman 2013: 45). My interpretation of this remark, in relation to the topic being discussed, is that there is room enough in dance archives and dance research for the inclusion of the voices of all types of dancers. He goes on to say,

> By acknowledging the importance of embodied experience in culture, oral history interviews represent dance culture...oral history interviews can be mined for deep information on how dance lives as a complex form of cultural knowledge.
>
> (Friedman 2013: 47)

It is through, and in agreement with, this acknowledgement by Friedman that I return to the purpose at hand and present this thesis, and the thirty-eight stories of individuals who offer considerable insight into their lives as dancers. Through their voices the opportunity arises to enter their dance experiences, and use them to further understand the role of dance from a personal and social context. However, the larger discussion of inclusion and significance is a complex debate that will not be resolved here. What is most important, no matter the context, is that *all* forms of dance experience are thought to hold a place of significance, and are treated as such by the dance community at large. As both a dancer and a dance scholar, I see that there is room enough for all.

v. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One approaches the subject by presenting the research aims, objectives, questions, and overall goals. It introduces the participants, as well as the early theoretical inspirations and realisations, and the conceptual development of the project. As the participants are actively involved in multiple forms of dance and dancing, a definition that would be representative of them all is discussed, as well as the difficulties and discrepancies when presenting a narrated version of a dance experience. The chapter finishes with a brief introduction to what are referred to as “the three E’s” – encounter, experience, and event, each of which forms an underlying foundation for the research.

Chapter Two presents the methodological process and procedures. It outlines the creation of a methodological field that combines aspects of oral history and ethnography, as well as utilising digital technology. Also included

are details of the interviews and their structure, including the development of questions and starting points for data analysis. More in-depth information about the participants is introduced, beginning with general statistics and sample profiles. The chapter concludes with a discussion of sociologist Robert Stebbins' theory of serious and casual leisure, which is used as a framework to further present the participants and their dance activities.

Chapter Three is a presentation of the contributing theoretical frames used to support, examine, and analyse the stories. The primary structure that forms the theoretical foundation is transformative learning as developed by psychologist Jack Mezirow (Mezirow 1991, 2000). Firstly, will be a discussion of the development of the theory, followed by its use and expansion upon by others, and finally, its application within arts based contexts. Also included in the chapter are the supporting contributions of flow (Csíkszentmihályi 1990), peak experience (Maslow 1964), and constructive/development (Kegan 1994) theories.

Chapters one to three make up the first half of the thesis and are meant to serve as an introduction to not only the research and participants, but also the conceptual considerations behind the creation, examination and analysis of their stories. The second half is a presentation of the stories themselves, focusing on the themes of encounters, relationships, and perceptions and perspectives that were found to encompass the participant's experiences with dance and dancing. A short interlude section introduces these themes, showing how the headings for the subsequent chapters developed. Each were identified through the data analysis, and are introduced prior to the

discussion to provoke points of reference for the reader as they move into the latter chapters of the thesis. Through these categories, the data is examined to address the patterns identified through the thematic analysis, by providing evidence from the stories related to the development of the adolescent and adult systems of belief.

Chapter four approaches the topic of encounter as a way of examining the childhood, adolescent, and adult meetings with dance. It plays an important role in the development of belief systems in that it was through such interactions that decisions and points of view in regards to dance and dancing developed. The beginning of the chapter outlines the experiences from the participant's younger years, and then connects them with their later adult scenarios. Although all of the participants claimed to have experienced a form of transformation as a result of their dance participation, some described a more momentous occasion, or what Rodger Abrahams (1986) refers to as an 'extra-ordinary' experience, citing it as an exceptional happening which significantly and permanently altered their lives. Such experiences are presented here and are discussed in relation to transformation and transformative learning.

Chapter five focuses on the topic of relationships. Present in the data were different types of connections to dance and dancing that were produced by social influences and personal interpretations. These associations play important cause and effect roles which prompted the participants to develop and later reform their systems of belief. Profiled are those present in childhood and adolescence, which are juxtaposed with the associations in adulthood.

They are important to the research in that they play a vital role in the rejection and eventual acceptance and integration of dance and dancing into their lives.

Chapter six includes insights based upon the perspective and perceptions about dance and dancers as expressed by the participants. Firstly, is a discussion of professional versus amateur in dance communities, how this concept reflects upon how the participants perceive themselves, and the ways in which it hierarchically affects them and the form in terms of social versus art dance. Included is the notion of a 'real' dancer, and the acceptance or rejection of the title based upon personal opinions and/or the placement of themselves within their perception of the dance world. Connected to this is commentary about the alteration and integration of identity, as well as evidence related to Mezirow's perspective transformation and the ways in which it is discerned by both the participants and those around them.

Chapter seven/Conclusion reflects upon the research project and process, and works to bring together the multiple strands presented throughout the thesis. It returns to the arguments and concepts initiated in the introduction associated with the inclusion of the voices and experiences of non-professional dancers, and consider issues related to value and significance and their determination within the field of dance. It also discusses possibilities for further research in this area based upon the perceived holes that can be filled by similar investigative endeavours.

Chapter One

1.1 Starting with a Story

Bob and I were the only two people on an airport shuttle bus on a late and rainy Baltimore evening. We politely exchanged pleasantries about our lives and when he learned that my field of interest was dance, he excitedly asked if he could tell me his dance story. Curious about what he might say, especially as he seemed quite keen to share it, I agreed. Bob spent his childhood in a small suburban city in Texas, where he spent many an evening watching his parents dance together. They were amateur ballroom dance champions, and always seemed to be preparing for an event or competition. Although he enjoyed observing them moving to the music, he was terribly shy and too embarrassed to try any form of dance. Years went by, and while attending university, he accepted a dare from a fraternity brother and entered a Twist[26] contest. Much to his surprise, he won! Bob exclaimed, 'In that instant my life was forever changed!' He went on to tell me how, as a result of his achievement, he began to take dance lessons and attend dance events on a regular basis. At one such evening, he met his wife with whom he now competes in ballroom dance contests - following in the footsteps of his parents. A computer software salesman by trade, he explained that since discovering dance, his life is divided between two pathways - his work life and his dance life, the latter being his true passion, and the activity that he felt most defines his identity. He said, 'I sell computer software, but I *am* a dancer'. At the end of the ride, we wished each other well and went our

[26] *The Twist* (1960) is a song and subsequent dance made popular by the American musical artist Chubby Checker. It was followed by *Let's Twist Again* (1961), also recorded by Checker, and *Twist and Shout* (1963) recorded by the British band The Beatles. The subsequent popular social dance by the same name involves rotating the hips and knees in a fashion that mimics a twisting of the body.

separate ways. I remember standing and watching him walk away, feeling quite transfixed by his story. Never had I met anyone with the type of enthusiasm he expressed about dance, so much so that the result of our time together left me feeling quite inspired by the experience.

It was around this time in my life that the organisation with whom I was originally going to do my PhD research, backed out of the project leaving me looking for a new topic. Bob's story so intrigued me that it prompted a reconsideration of my research interests in favour of looking at experiences where individuals that did not train to be professional dancers, felt that their lives had been changed or transformed because of their participation with dance.

1.2 Approaching the Subject

As seen in the above story, this research developed out of an interest in the experiences of people who did not spend a large amount of time in childhood or adolescence training to be a dancer. Most claim that their association is insignificant or illusory, or without notable significance. This scenario was completely opposite to my experience with dance - I began dancing as a young child, entered a pre-professional ballet-training programme, and continued to study dance at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Dance as practice and research was interwoven throughout my life and provided some of the most integral and memorable moments. To remove it would be equal to removing a large portion of me, my interactions, my education, as well as many of my friends and colleagues. Through my chance meeting with Bob, I began to become aware that there were entire worlds related to dance activities outside of the arena of professional training that

were just as meaningful and open for exploration. Around the same time, I also began having conversations with friends and co-workers who expressed that they did not believe they could dance, felt embarrassed when dancing, or longed to have it as a part of their lives but were either too self-conscious or intimidated to participate. Many included stories of past experiences with dance that were either very painful or extremely personal, but most included the phrase '*I'm not a dancer'* or *'I don't dance'*. These interactions continued to raise questions, making me realise that I wanted to know more about the experiences, opinions, and attitudes from those outside the world of professional dance and dancers, and I began to consider the causes that made people reject or fear dance participation. Were there specific occurrences that prompted such opinions and/or systems of belief? Or was it as a result of peer pressure, socialisation and enculturation? What were the reasons that some overcame these fears, enabling them not only to engage with some form of dancing, but also to embrace it in a way that it becomes a primary source of entertainment, exercise, community involvement, and social interaction? In other words, what exactly does it mean to say that one's life was changed or transformed because of engaging with different forms of dance?

My aim then, became to seek out people who claimed that they did not have, or had only a recreational relationship to different types of dance when they were younger, encountered it as an adult, and as a result, profess to have experienced a change or transformation, thus placing it in an important position in their lives. In light of this, other objectives in relation to dance and dancing include: the investigation of its use as a way through which oneself

and the world are experienced; the exploration of social constructs and complex systems of belief; especially within the arena of those who claimed to have little or no exposure to or training in dance in childhood, the understanding of the ability of dance and dancing to play a role during the 'question mark periods' in identity and life (Fuller Snyder 2005: 10); and the notion of transformative experience, as prompted through encounters and experiences with dance.

1.3 Presentation of the Project

Finding Their Dance is a study designed to explore the personal narratives and experiences of individuals who claim that through their participation with dance and dancing, they have experienced changes in their lives that they consider to be transformative. So much so, that they have altered their lives in such a way that dance activities and associations now occupy a meaningful or prominent role. Some examples include a change in career, the expansion or diversification of community or peer groups, the alteration of identity, and a sizable amount of time spent dancing. Expressed within the stories are the deeply held convictions that it was their dance participation that served as the catalyst for change, and while the research does not aim to dispute their claim, it will examine and question their experiences from a variety of perspectives.

The title of the thesis carries with it a meaning that is two-fold, in that the phrase is used to underscore both the literal and metaphysical expression of the terminology. The majority of the participants are people who, for much of their lives, had either no interest, or considered themselves unlikely candidates for participation in dance classes or events. But because of a

meeting or encounter with a particular form or genre of dance, they have found an outlet that helps to fulfil the physical, emotional, social, and psychological needs. They have each chosen to work within a specific style or technique that seems to resonate with their being: they have literally found *their* dance.

I also refer to this term as a metaphor for coming to a place that describes the journey to discovering the best of one's self. It is what psychologist Abraham Maslow refers to on his pyramid representing a human's hierarchy of needs, as coming to the top of the pyramid, or reaching self-actualisation. He says, 'It refers to the [person's] desire for self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualised in what he is potentially' (Maslow, 2013 [1943]: 382). In this way, for those whom I interviewed, participation in dance activities has contributed to their quality of life not only on an embodied level, but also connects the boundaries between the physical, social, and emotional. The experience, as it evolved, was an equal alteration of both the internal and the external, resulting in significant shifts in their realities and life choices.

1.4 Introduction to the Participants

Thirty-eight participants agreed to be interviewed for this research, all of them having discovered dance through various people and pathways. What has kept them dancing is the personally endowed sense of meaning and the role it plays in the construction and (re)interpretation of their experience. As mentioned above, the majority of the participants maintain that dance held no meaningful place in their lives prior to their encounter, and for most of them, their opinion was one of disinterest. There are a few however, for whom dancing was a limited recreational activity, or a longed after dream. However,

what they all have in common is a shared belief that their experience with dance as an adult has altered their lives in a manner that has had transformative ramifications.

Some examples of the participants include Parker,[27] a former politician specialising in foreign affairs that had never formally danced in childhood, and who as an adult took a contemporary movement class on a dare from his girlfriend. He describes the experience as being '*the most humiliating of my life*', but he returned a few days later citing, '*there was just "something" that opened up in me*', and continued to take classes. Thirty years later he is the artistic director of a contemporary dance company. He has integrated his passion for politics with most of his funding coming from the United States State Department, and his company travelling the world serving as cultural ambassadors. Another participant, Celine, described herself as a social introvert until she was pulled onstage by a friend at a Big Band concert. She cites this moment as the entrance into the second phase of her life, meaning one that includes swing dancing. She cannot now imagine an existence without it, and has recently become engaged to a man she met while at a dance event. In her interview, participant Karen spoke of taking some jazz and ballet classes while at university and, although she somewhat enjoyed it, decided that she had neither the talent or body type to continue her studies. Many years later, she began going to sacred circle dance gatherings to have some time away from motherhood. At one such event she experienced a moment where she realised the movement practice had become an '*outward expression of my inner prayer'*. Inspired by her dance experiences, she

[27] All the names of the participants have been anonymised for the protection of their identities.

decided to go into the ministry and includes dancing in all areas of her religious life and work. These short examples support the overall purpose of the research, which explores such experiences in order to gain a better understanding of the differences in the relationships with dance and dancing from childhood to those as an adult.

The research revealed that the majority of the participants maintain an affiliation with dance that is non-professional; meaning that the purpose behind their engagement falls within the categories of leisure or social, rather than as a primary means for employment. Of the thirty-eight participants, some have created professional careers that involve dance and dancing, but only three have ever been employed in the capacity of a professional dancer.[28] Therefore, those in the former group will be referred to in this research as dance professionals, in that their careers are not as paid performers, but rather as dance school owners, dance teachers, or employed in the dancewear industry. The latter are those who have received financial compensation for participating in professional dance productions. There are others who do perform, but it is as a part of their voluntary commitment to a group, and not as a paid professional engagement, and do not consider themselves to be professional dancers. Therefore, the time spent with dance and dancing for most of the participants, is outside the realm of a paid professional career. It is as a leisure activity that occupies their free time,

[28] Sociologist Robert Stebbins defines a professional as 'someone who is dependent upon the income from an activity that other people pursue with little or no remuneration as leisure' (2007: 6). Therefore, a professional dancer would be one who earns their living as a dance performer. Of those who had professional engagements, they were part-time or temporary opportunities and not a full-time profession.

which is both consciously and actively chosen. A further discussion about amateur versus professional is presented in chapter six.

1.5 Research Questions and Concepts

The research questions that guide the investigation and serve as connecting threads throughout are:

- What is the role dance plays in the lives and experiences of non-professional dancers, those who do not engage with formal dance training, or those who claim to not participate in dance activities?
- How does the development of a belief system about a particular activity (such as dancing), alter and affect one's perspective and perceptions in adulthood? What circumstances need to occur in order to alter such a perspective or belief system?
- What exactly does it mean to say that one's life is transformed as a result of engaging with dance? What are the parameters, circumstances, and evidence which support or dispute such claims of transformation?

When considered together, these questions narrow the area of investigation to a particular realm of dancer and dance participation, and indicate that there are possible personal, social, and hierarchically constructed dividing lines between those who do and those who do not dance. But the lines are often blurry especially when exploring the concepts of "what is dance?" and "who is a dancer?" Anthropologist Judith Lynn Hanna says, 'To dance is human, and humanity almost universally expresses itself in dance' (Hanna 1987:3), and as members of the human species, we all communicate and express ourselves in

some form through the vehicle of movement (Goffman 1969, Blacking 1986, Shilling 2003, Grau 2016). A popular misconception though is that because humans have the ability to move, and movement is used as a form of communication, then everyone must have the innate capability to engage in dance (Hanna 1987:3, Jones 1999). While, from a purely physical standpoint, there is some truth in this statement,[29] it also brings into question not only the definition of dance, but the role that dance plays within culture and society.

Keeping this at the forefront, the core of this research therefore centres around the stories of individuals who may have had differing opinions, affiliations, and experiences with dance and dancing at various points in their lives. Consequently, a rich commentary on the insights and attitudes from within a personally and socially constructed context are revealed. As multiple styles of dance[30] are represented across the participant group, and although it is referred to throughout the thesis in broad terms as "dance", a definition is needed that acts as an umbrella under which they could all comfortably reside. Philosopher Francis Sparshott, when considering the genre from an abstract perspective asks, 'how can I know what dance is? What is the form, and what is the basis, of my understanding of what dancing is?' (Sparshott 1999: 69). Dance scholar Roxanne Fenton, amongst others, (see also Kealiinohomoku 1980, Kaeppler 1985, Williams 1991, Grau 2012) also considers this question by engaging in a process of 're-examining existing definitions' (Fenton 1997:117) of dance to find one that was appropriate within a cross-cultural context. Although not reaching any consensus, what was

[29] 'On the biological level, human beings require some kind of physical involvement in an intensive and rhythmically oriented output of energy which, because of its intensity and special character, must be contained within a limited period of time.' (Kealiinohomoku 1976: 43)

[30] In total, eighteen dance styles are represented across the cohort of participants.

agreed upon was that any investigation of a system of structured movement should be set within the context of the culture or group being researched.[31] As such, and in keeping with the representation of multiple genres in this investigation, dance and dancing will be framed within the following definition as proposed by dance anthropologist Joanne Kealiinohomoku,

> Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group.
>
> (Kealiinohomoku 1980: 8)

This definition was chosen because it addresses the key elements related to movement and expression, as well as a recognition of differing cultural perspectives. My only criticism relates to the reference to 'purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements', as spontaneous movements, depending on the context of the presentation, can be interpreted by the viewer as "dance". As most of the styles presented here are codified forms that are recognised as such from a Western or Anglo/American perspective, Kealiinohomoku's interpretation is the most appropriate. It offers a point of view that is simple and somewhat generic, that can be applied to a variety of dance genres. It also honours the perspectives of each of the participants and the manner in which they participate and interpret the concept of dance from their own experience. However, this too presents difficulties as the meaning

[31] Fenton refers to the work of the dance anthropologists mentioned above when she says, 'dance' is a problematic term. When used outside discussions of western culture, the idea of 'dance' may be used to bring together activities that are actually unrelated…We cannot use the concept 'dance' unless the culture we are studying has an equivalent concept' (Fenton 1997: 122).

allocated by one participant, might differ from that of another. Dance scholar Sue Jones states,

> …the word "dance" can be used from perspectives that encompass varying degrees of understanding of this concept and this in turn can affect how the word is used. When we explore the ways in which we acquire a concept, such as dance, we are able to see how different levels of understanding are possible.
>
> (Jones 1999: 86)

Jones' comment of 'varying degrees of understanding' suitably encompasses the variety of comments about and relationships to, what is referred to as "dance" by the participants. Although all are adult participants, and are engaged with a specific dance form, there are differing opinions as to what dance is and who can assume the title of a dancer. Sparshott suggests that 'any characterisation of a dance gives rise to a rudimentary classification' (Sparshott 1995: 14), yet never quite encompasses the essential nature of dance itself. I argue that this also applies to the verbal expression of a dance experience, and as with the above comment from Jones, and the definition offered from Kealiinohomoku, any such classification must be viewed from within the context of each individual and their dance experience. Otherwise there runs the risk of conceptual reification, such that it takes on qualities that are larger and outside of the context of the experience in which it resides. Jones again states, 'The way in which we use and explain the word "dance" needs to have some flexibility…depending on whom we are addressing' (Jones 1999: 98). Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the references to dance are made not only within the contextual framework posed by the

above definition, but also as the tool or catalyst through which the participants perceive their personal alterations occurring. As such, what is clear from the interviews is that there are many differing opinions and ways of engaging, both physically and verbally, with what the participants refer to as dance. This study considers both aspects and engages with them from a variety of perspectives, but as the majority of those interviewed reside in either the United Kingdom or the United States, the viewpoint will be focused on the role and recognition of dance/dancing/dancers from an Anglo/American based social context. Therefore, the dance styles referenced in this thesis are primarily codified or social dance forms that are recognised from the perspective of a Western point of view, and are labelled and defined as such (A full list can be found in appendix D). This narrowing not only helps to clarify both the purpose and participants, but also refines the definitions for dance in a way that places it within a particular cultural framework, allowing for an interpretation from a more singular base of understanding.

1.6 Putting Dance into Words: Conflicting Opinions

A central premise of this research is the application of verbalised stories as primary and representational source material of experiences with different forms of dance. An early question was, can a dance experience be accurately expressed through a verbal narrative? As the experience itself is ephemeral, and by virtue of its placement in the past, the research and analysis is dependent upon the individual recollection of the participant. Dancer and psychologist Carol Press says, ‘We represent what is subjectively felt with words, but those very words objectify the experience. To write, to describe, and to stay within the experiential is a difficult feat…’ (Press 2002:11).

However, there are conflicting opinions (Blacking 1986, Thomas 1997, Ward 1997, Sklar 2001) about whether dance can only truly be experienced in the moment the movements are performed, or can also be a recalled memory expressed linguistically. Sociologist Helen Thomas speaks about the study of dance as being problematic in that the specificity often required in collecting data can be elusive when it comes to putting movement meaning into words. She states '…dance meanings *cannot* be produced in words: they are of a different – although equally valid – order' (Thomas 1997:12). Sociologist Andrew Ward concurs, and considers the use of words (verbal or written) to describe a physical or non-rational phenomena,[32] as something that ceases to express that which is truly inherent to the form. He argues,

> Skilful authors may be able to create sensations that summon up memories of dance events; they may be able to illuminate the nature of dance and (re)orient our views of what dance is; but when all is said and done, writing is simply not dancing.
>
> (Ward 1997:6)

Although Ward and Thomas' viewpoints are acknowledged, for the purposes of this research, the participants were asked to speak specifically about their *experiences* with dance, and not the physical sensations or descriptions of the act of dancing. I agree that the inhabitation of the physical dance experience is very different than a verbalised accounting, and that the knowledge, memory, and meaning utilise other types of processes. But whether performing steps or recalling a dance experience, the place each occupies

[32] In his articles, *Dancing in the Dark: Rationalism and the Neglect of Social Dance* (1993), and *Dancing around the Meaning (and the Meaning around Dance)* (1997), Ward suggests that dance is often categorised as non-rational due to its recognition as both a non-verbal and inherently social activity (1993:16). He argues that dance is often marginalised in both academia and the mainstream, and it is vital to recognise the importance of those which are considered to be an 'irreducible human quality' (1997:7), of which dance is included. He says, 'It is our responsibility (as scholars, dancers, and citizens) to argue for the inherent meaningfulness of dance and for the place of dance as an essential human practice' (1997:7).

within the individual is one that is representative of the experience; it is only the means through which it is expressed that differs. In his research on the Venda girl's initiation ceremony, anthropologist John Blacking states,

> The kinds of data that are most needed are people's perceptions and conceptions of how their dances are structured, and what they mean to them and to others, how decisions are made in particular dance situations, and how dance experience effects social life. The emphasis must be on the languages of dance as means of human communication on the grounds that dance may be a special form of knowledge, derived from a particular repertoire of species – specific characteristics, whose practice can have implications for action beyond its immediate social uses and assigned meanings. In other words, although the meanings of different dance styles are, as symbol systems, intimately associated with social and cultural systems, the act of performing the movements can generate somatic experiences that are detached from those specific meanings and can be reinterpreted in a variety of ways.
>
> (Blacking 1986: 68)

It is this last line in Blacking's statement which reflects the possibility for the interpretations of the dance experience from multiple perspectives that correlates to the goals of my research. The focus of the enquiry is therefore more concentrated on the ripples of effect and change, rather than exacting descriptions of dance movements or phrases. As the largest proportion of the fieldwork is based upon verbalised accountings of memorable movement experiences, the goal is to investigate and present the stories in such a way that will appropriately express the acquired meaning of a narrated experience which includes dance and dancing.

Dance scholars Ralph Buck and Nicholas Rowe, in their recent series of books titled, *Talking Dance* (2014, 2016)[33] also argue for the importance of

[33] There are currently two volumes in the series: Contemporary Histories from the Southern Mediterranean (2014), and Contemporary Histories from the South China Seas (2016).

the presentation of verbalised accounts and experiences from/of dancers. The foundation of the books is to represent dance and dancers from all over the world, with the primary source of evidence being their voices and stories. Buck says,

> I advocate for dance research that gives space and time to personal stories because I want people to have the opportunities to say, 'I dance…'. I want people, any and everywhere, to reflect on what dance does and might mean for them.
>
> (Buck 2016: 7)

Found in their work are parallel goals of highlighting through story, the experiences of dance and dancers from a multitude of backgrounds. The aim of their research:

> …seeks to illustrate that there are many different pathways into dance, ways of learning dance, of being accepted into dance professions, of creating dance, of performing dance, of watching dance and of organising dance events; that dance has diverse connections with families, societies, governments, the economy, the past and the future; that the actual experiences of dance practitioners are fascinating, are culturally relevant, and challenge any attempt to stereotype, define or otherwise distinguish what it means to dance around the world.
>
> (Buck and Rowe 2014: xvii)

Dance scholar Jane Desmond echoes this thought and believes that an area in dance research that warrants further ethnographic exploration are the movement moments experienced in the lives of everyday people. She promotes the increased need for research into the areas of middlebrow and amateur dance forms and experiences when she says, '…they too are a part of "dance studies", if we conceive of dance studies as the study of 'dancing' however defined, in all forms and formats, and by all populations.' (Desmond

2000: 43). Each of these scholars share a common view in regards to the investigation of all forms of dance and dancers, as well as the feeling of importance in the representation of their stories and voices. It is the verbal contextualisation of an embodied experience that provides an illustration of what has been, and can be applied to present knowledge and circumstances. The stories of the participants in this research therefore are more of a reflection on, and representation of, dance and the body and their use as a site of knowledge. What is highlighted is the information on the style of dance chosen, aspects of community, personal revelations, and the differences in their lives related to the experience of “before” and “after” discovering dancing.

1.7 Initial Research Inspirations

The investigation into dance, story, and experience were continually at the forefront of the overall investigation. Alongside these, there were other motivating factors that helped to shape this research, prompting questions and areas of interest that worked together to guide and ground the direction of the project. Each are briefly discussed below.

1.7.1 A Synergetic Perspective

Originally motivated in the direction of holism and relational systems, the starting point for this research was somewhat different in its design from its eventual evolution. This process began with the intention of examining whether the evaluation of a narrated personal experience with a form of dance could be analysed in somewhat the same manner as a dance event. A dance event is a coming together where individuals or groups of people participate in an activity or happening where dance is the central focus. The examination

often explores individual participation, the links between members of a community, the purpose for the dance within a cultural context, the choreographic content, as well as contributing symbols and rituals. They are isolable and often stand out as moments in time that are separate from those taking place in everyday experience (see Kealiinohomoku 1976, Cowan 1990, Sklar 2001). It is this final element of a framed "time out of time" moment that acts as a link to the discussion of what the participants refer to as transformational experience.

Within the initial investigation, I was inspired by the work of dance ethnologist Allegra Fuller Snyder and her multi-levelled methodology for the examination of a dance event in her work, *Levels of Event Patterns: A theoretical model applied to the Yaqui Easter ceremonies* (1989). The multi-tiered framework acts as holistic model by allowing the researcher to examine each of the layers of a dance event or experience from a specific angle or topic. They take into account such things as the details of the dance from a group and individual perspective, the dance space, the internal and external experience of the dancer, as well as the micro and macro details of the event as a whole. As in the telling of a story, there is always a clear beginning, middle, and end, the pieces of information linking together in a temporal progression of sequenced events. Each strand holds an important place and should be examined as such, allowing for a holistic picture of the event to unfold.

This methodological tool pays homage to the work of Fuller Snyder's father, design scientist Buckminster Fuller and his theory of Synergetics, which is described as, 'the empirical study of systems in transformation…' (Zeiler 2011: 357). As such, a complex system is analysed by examining the related

and unrelated parts that come together to create an eventual whole (Fuller 1982). The study of complex systems comes primarily from the areas of mathematics and physics and helps to investigate the ways in which distinct elements interact and influence one another. Synergetics takes into consideration each element belonging to the larger whole to be studied individually, and as a contributor, to gain a full picture of the whole itself. Like a tree, synergetic thinking involves the examination of many large and small branches, each containing many offshoots. In this way, close attention must be paid to both the macro and micro elements, each being both part and whole in themselves; with the researcher willing to frame and reframe their information throughout the entire process to create the most detailed picture.

Evident in both the work of Fuller and Fuller Snyder is the hypothesis that knowledge is constructed through doing and experiencing, and that these experiences come because of possible disparate or unrelated factors; the result being that many experiences in life come about as a consequence of a direct or indirect participation within a synergetic complex system. (Fuller 1982, Fuller Snyder 1996, 2005) In response, this research not only examines the effects of participating in dance on one's personal experience, but factors in all the elements that came together to create that effect. This concept is further utilised by Fuller Snyder's work related to 'dance as a way of knowing' (Fuller Snyder 1974, 2005: 6), which recognises that through dance we access, represent and understand ourselves in ways that are cultural, historical, personal and physical.

After careful consideration, I determined that the original focus which placed the work of Fuller and Fuller-Snyder's theories as the primary theoretical

frames needed to be altered and applied to future projects. However, they are still utilized within this research, serving as overarching concepts and contributors, instead of essential foundations. In saying this, however, the inspiration and recognition of similar contributing theories and understandings would not have been possible if Fuller and Fuller Snyder's work had not been investigated. For example, transformative learning theory, is used because it also reflects a holistic set of principles that are similar to synergetic philosophies. By applying this alongside other theoretical frames, the work of Fuller and Fuller-Snyder is still relevant, enabling a more full and holistic understanding. Therefore, the basic principles found within a synergetic ideology remain as a guide throughout the thesis. The known whole for each individual is represented as their narrated story(ies) of experiences with dance. The related or unrelated parts that come together to create this whole are represented by the theoretical options presented as possible explanations for the causes for the resultant evolution. As such, the intertwining threads of theory, story, and experience as related to an engagement with dance can be examined. Keeping this in mind, decisions needed to be made in regards to which pieces offered the most information for the best purposes of this research. Eventually, the investigation was narrowed to encompass the alterations of systems of belief about dance from childhood to adulthood. According to Hanna, 'Holism does not mean an attempt to know everything…It implies functional relations within a system, but does not assume total interrelatedness nor relationships of equal importance' (Hanna 1987:19). The process of investigating the participant's stories therefore, occurs through a variety of theoretical frames to both critically investigate their

claims and experiences, and place the various pieces of the stories within a holistic context, through which they can each be examined on their own merits.

1.7.2 Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory serves as the primary lens through which the data is framed. It explores the experiences of individuals where, as psychologist M. Carolyn Clark suggests, '…they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognise' (Clark 2012: 427). The theory posits that by adulthood, there is an accumulation of experiences and knowledge that formulate the ways in which one views and interacts with the world. They are the 'dispositions and capabilities that make up our everyday involvement' (Mezirow 1990: 4) and include the social norms and cultural mores introduced in childhood. Transformative learning suggests that as one ages, these fixed foundations of knowledge can be altered, and replaced with new or renewed knowledge. At the centre of this philosophy is what the theory's founder, psychologist Jack Mezirow terms 'a disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow 1991: 218) which triggers a re-evaluation of values and judgments, causing new understandings to emerge. This 'perspective transformation' (ibid: 170) is the overall goal in a series of steps that includes the alteration of previously held 'frames of reference and habits of mind' (Mezirow 2000:19), both of which serve as guides for decision making. The process of perspective transformation is described as, 'the process of using a prior interpretation to construe new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action' (Mezirow 1996: 162). Mezirow, amongst others (Clark 1993, Taylor 2007, Cranton and Kroth 2014) stress that transformative

learning is a multi-layered *process* of (re)constructing past epistemological systems of belief, resulting in a revised understanding of the relationship with one's self and others. The theory and its application to the stories of the participants is discussed further in Chapter three.

1.7.3 Story and Narrative

A central premise of the transformative learning theory is the use of story as a means through which knowledge is communicated and generated. Stories surround us daily and are essential components of our personal and social worlds. They serve as pervasive representations of events and experience, the creation and sharing of which reflect personal understandings of the events and happenings within experience and life. Sociologist Annabelle Nelson says, '…stories are maps about life. These maps show what qualities create what events' (Nelson 2009: 218). Continuous in their accumulation, stories are contemplative barometers through which humans deliberate and respond, in order to create a personal and collective field of reference. They are an oral accounting of people places, and periods of time that are both temporary and temporal as the story is passed on and shared. Literary theorist Roland Barthes offers,

> The narratives of the world are without number. In the first place the word "narrative" covers an enormous variety of genres which are themselves divided up between different subjects, as if any material was suitable for the composition of the narrative: the narrative may incorporate articulate language, spoken or written; pictures, still or moving; gestures and the ordered arrangement of all the ingredients…the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives.

(Barthes 1966:1)[34]

For the purposes of this research, stories are used to interpret the experiences shared by the participants. They are the raw data and represent the process through which information is gathered and used to conceptualise and create knowledge. Philosopher Walter Fisher labels humans as 'homo narrans' (Fisher 1985:74) as the telling and receiving of stories are central to the process of communication, identity construction, and meaning construal within the investigation and interpretation of experience. Stories are the cognitive and verbal building blocks that allow for the construction of internal and external explorations of ourselves and the world. As such, verbal communication is multi-layered in its functionality as both an internal and external system, and is one of the primary means for expression and integration through interacting with others. Therefore, experience and narrative are inextricably connected as a form of processing the happenings of life. Human development scholar Robert Atkinson states, 'Storytelling is in our blood. We are a storytelling species… Life storytelling gives us direction, validates our own experience, restores value to living, and strengthens community bonds' (Atkinson 2002:122). Stories are used to establish our place in the world, to help form identity, and understand the experiences and existence of others. They serve as a primary way of perceiving and exploring, allowing for greater depths of knowledge and experience. Therefore, narrative learning through communication with others is 'constructivist in character, but the construction of the character is necessary to make the experience

[34] Originally published in French in 1960 in the text *Sur Racine*.

accessible (that is to language it), and how it is constructed determines what meaning is had for the person' (Clark and Rossiter 2008: 64). The participants in this research, as children, adolescents and adults, have each constructed a story which was often based upon a personal or social exposure to dance in some form,[35] which contributed to the creation of a certain attitude, opinion, or system of belief. Through the use of story, they present their experiences, both past and present, as well as the effects it has had on their lives. No matter the influence, what these stories reveal, are relationships, positive or negative, to dance and dancing, and it is these perceptions that form the foundational data for the project.

1.7.4 Dance Stories

As stated earlier, at the centre of this research is the analysis of what is narrated in regards to an experience with dancing - it is not a replacement of a physical dance interaction, but rather offers an equal but alternative footprint of sorts. Therefore, within this research the body will be recognised as a site of knowledge which informs experience, with the primary data residing in the stories about dance. Dance ethnologist Mary Coros refers to 'body-being speaking' (Coros 1982: 3) as the means through which an experience of dancing can be articulated, and knowledge is generated. Elliot Eisner, an arts and education scholar, states, 'What the term knowledge means depends on how enquiry is undertaken and the kind of problem one pursues' (Eisner 2008: 4). In this instance, what is undertaken specifically relates to the search

[35] Stories are also accessed and created because of exposure to outlets such as books, films and television, and the arts, and these forms of socially created media and culture play an important and often influential role in the construction of a world view, offering the opportunity to engage with 'others who live very different lives from their own' (Jarvis 2012, Cranton and Kroth 2014: 14, 15). These interactions, however, are not always positive in nature, and can be used to form opinions or habitual thinking that remain well into adulthood.

for understanding how and what the language expressed about a dance experience contributes to personal and social perceptions. Eisner refers to this as a 'mimetic relationship between something said and something done…in a form that allows you to walk in the shoes of another…' (ibid: 6). Dance scholar Sue Stinson continues this enquiry when she posits '…it is the lived experience of dancing' (Stinson 1995: 43) that has contributed the most to her scholarly work on dance. She refers to the 'kinaesthetic sense' (ibid: 44) as that which connects the inner and outer selves, providing one with information about their unique and personal experiences. She comments that,

> Words are the most common means of communicating private experience, and I will suggest shortly that verbal language should include kinaesthetic imagery if it is to fully represent lived experience.
>
> (Stinson 1995:44)

Dance scholar Dierdre Sklar concurs with Stinson's statement, when she contends that kinetic language connects to embodied sensations. She observes,

> One can use words to evoke their somatic references. Considered this way, there is no conflict between somatic and verbal experience because they are mutually generative, part of the same epistemological process. The process constitutes meaning-making, and body-making. The body is itself a process, one that organises as it apprehends, and becomes what it organises.
>
> (Sklar 2000: 74)

In this way both the experience of dance and the resultant stories equally contribute to creation of knowledge. One is not replacing the other, but are seen instead as active processes, each of which are utilised in the manner relevant to the contextual purpose.

1.7.5 Belief Systems

At the start of the research, the intention was to investigate the ways in which the participants claimed that dance had had a transformative effect on their lives. Although the consideration of this remains an important piece of the overall puzzle, the concept of a transformation is difficult to research in that it is extremely subjective. Further, as a researcher who has not been present throughout the process of life changes that the participants are describing as their moments or process of transformation, the only evidence is that which is represented in their stories. Therefore, such an alteration is only truly known to the individual, who retains the intimate knowledge of their past self, as well as what alterations have taken place. As the language expressed in the stories are the only means of evaluating such an experience, I decided that it would be more productive to examine the statements related to the changes in their belief systems about dance, as a means for better understanding what is described as a personal change or transformation. Educationalist Pamela Meyer concurs with this methodological choice when she states about her research with adult learners, '…their descriptions of transformation were rooted in shifts in self-beliefs' (Meyer 2009: 58). Although still quite subjective, they offer a more refined set of markers through which the stories can be assessed. Social science researchers Josep-Lluis Usó-Doménech and Josué-Antonio Nescolarde-Selva posit that a belief system is defined as,

> …the stories we tell ourselves to define our personal sense of Reality. Every human being has a belief system that they utilise, and it is through this mechanism that we individually, "make sense" of the world around us.

(Usó-Doménech and Nescolarde-Selva 2015: 148)

These stories are thus created and constructed through the process of engaging with and interpreting experience, and are contextually catalogued and referenced according to the ways in which certain memories or circumstances need interpreting (Kahneman 2012). Very rarely are belief systems completed fixed, without the possibility for change, but such changes need stimulation in order to be reversed or reconceived (Mezirow 1975, 1990, Taylor 2000, Leicester 2008,). As will be discussed later in the chapter, this type of encounter or opportunity offers an opening for the alteration from one set of beliefs to another. Psychologist Jonathan Leicester states, for instance, that what we believe can be traced to a singular action or cause, which act as guides for decisions and behaviours. He says that a belief, '…is the result of cognitive appraisal of evidence…' (Leicester 2008: 218). Although each is based upon what he refers to as 'probably true', there is the recognition that such truths may have developed via interactions that produced a false sense of reality. As belief systems revolve around perceptible evidence, Leicester suggests that they are highly susceptible to change when challenged or alternate truths present themselves (See also Kuhn 1991). Alternatively, the evidence which originally produced the belief system, can be altered to continue to support 'events so that they fit the current belief' (Leicester 2008: 220). Considering this, such systems are concurrently rigid and flexible, and are dependent upon the encounters, experiences, and events one meets with as they progress through life.

1.8 The Three E's – Event, Encounter, Experience

Important to the investigation are the three 'E's' –encounter, experience, and event. Each of these emerged as prominent themes when considering the structural elements found within the stories. As the goals of this research includes the examination of narrated "moments" with dance, they each contribute to the examination of both the individual narratives, and the subsequent patterns across the participant cohort. They were integral to the early research and allowed for the when, why, and how questions to be addressed. Encounter is further addressed in Chapter four so is only briefly outlined here. Experience and event are the more foundational categories and so receive more attention at this time.

1.8.1 Encounters

Encounters are a naturally occurring part of our daily lives, the majority being of minor importance which are quickly forgotten. But in life there are some moments where an encounter produces an effect that is longer lasting, or has a greater impact, either positive or negative, and contains the possibility to move one's life or awareness in a new or unanticipated direction. Arts educator Peter London describes this type of an encounter as being an entirely chance moment when, 'Something new has to enter your prevailing life, and interrupt that life in some fashion and degree in order to break through the momentum of your ordinary life' (London 2013).[36] This definition aptly describes the ways in which dance was introduced to the participants, or described a later experience where dancing was seen at the catalyst for a life change. In either scenario, there was the mention that the experience was

[36] Personal correspondence, October 2013

unexpected and seemed to '*come out of nowhere'*, or '*took me by surprise*', containing an unforeseen quality, which moved the participants forward into the larger context of an experience.

Present at all developmental life stages, an encounter ranges from the aesthetic, religious, physical, or social. Psychologist Albert Bandura suggests that it is these chance encounters that contain the possibility to alter the life paths of individuals in a more meaningful way, both positive and negative, than planned events or experiences. Throughout people's daily lives there are meetings with potential elements that could serve as catalysts for change, and yet it is unknown to what degree the effects of a chance encounter will have. Why some factors create a lasting link, as opposed to others, is a difficult yet intriguing factor in the study of human behaviour. Bandura says, 'The unforseeability and branching power of fortuitous influences make the specific course of lives neither easily predictable nor easily socially engineerable' (Bandura 1982:749). While there are some experiences that do come about simply by chance, often there are notable factors (social, personal, cultural), that serve as the circumstances for change. These types of encounters begin a series of chain reactions that create links from the past to the present, providing insight and information as to how to proceed into the future. They are avenues of learning that force through barriers of habit and routine for a new way of thinking to emerge. Mezirow speaks to this new awareness and emergence when he says,

> In our encounters with the unfamiliar, we begin with partial insights to direct the way we collect additional data… When the properties of the event do not fit our existing schema, we create new schemes to integrate them. Each item of relevant information becomes a building block of understanding, which is transformed by further insight. We continually move back and forth between the parts and the whole of that which we seek to understand…
>
> (Mezirow 1990:9)

Our experiences then are a continual cycle of events and encounters through which new information is accumulated and assimilated, is applied to former knowledge, and/or replaces that which is no longer needed. As such, and for the purposes of this investigation, the concept of an encounter, both positive and negative, needs to encompass aspects found within experiences from childhood to adulthood. Mezirow refers to a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow 1991: 218) as an experience that occurs primarily amongst adults, leading towards a re-evaluation or transformation of belief systems developed in childhood, resulting in a revised outlook with a perceived positive outcome. While participants in this research certainly fit this profile, similar scenarios were discussed in relation to events produced in childhood and adolescence. However, instead of an alteration with a positive outcome, they were the moment(s) that induced and produced the values and views which were altered later in life. This notion has been suggested by other scholars (See Ada 1994, Kyuchukov 2000, Kerr 2014), but as this research includes reflections upon dance experiences from both life stages, I think it important to take a different stance in relation to the discussion on encounters.[37] As such, aspects related to a disorienting dilemma will be adjusted to encompass a

[37] Mezirow posits that because of the nature of accumulated knowledge, the process of transformative learning is inherently suited to adult experience. I am not contradicting this notion, but extracting a portion to apply to adolescent experience.

variety of experiences and memories, incorporating the portions of the theory that were the most applicable to the information presented.

Mentioned in the presentation of the research questions, was the inquiry as to whether it was the engagement with specifically *dance and dancing* that was the catalyst for the experience of transformation. In other words, why dance? Difficult to pinpoint is the answer as to why one chooses to engage in one activity over another. But, for the purposes of this research, the investigation focuses on why *these* individuals chose to engage with dance. As will be seen in forthcoming chapters, their reasons are varied, and often have to do with influences from people to places, and unrelated life circumstances. No matter the reason, because of an encounter as an adult, dance experiences manifested, infiltrating and influencing many areas of the participant's lives. When referring to an activity that catches attention in such a way that a person gives it a lot of time and attention, it was an often-heard remark by the participants of having become "*hooked*".[38] This concept, as researched by philosopher Steven G. Smith (2009) investigates the concept of 'hooks' as related to types of art and/or aesthetic experiences. He asserts that a 'hook experience is marked by unpredictability and individuality of response' (Smith 2009: 312), that is unique to the person for whom the experience occurred. The hook therefore, is the unexplainable thing that uncovers or works its way into the consciousness of the individual, releasing an insight, or asserting a form of power where everything seems to just click. This kind of hook moment exposes new learning, shifting the person into a position where an

[38] The work hook also refers to popular musical jargon in that it is most often associated with phrases, words, or chord structures that are developed to capture the attention of the listener.

assemblence of elements develops into meaningful interactions. The reasons for the hook can be representative of conscious and unconscious ideals, but produces an effect that eventually becomes actively present.

Further discussed in Chapter five is the claim from many of the participants against having any sort of physical or conscious relationship to dance for much of their lives. There are a few who had an interest, a short-lived experience, or a recreational association when they were young, but its impact seems minimal. Others mentioned having had no interest until the moment of their encounter; the meeting with dance producing unexpected discoveries. Thus, some further questions include: Are there quantifiable patterns and factors related to a specific type of encounter that can be identified? In other words, are there parts that can be separated out from the whole of the experience to be determined as the 'hooks'? Do the causes of a self-described transformative encounter [with dance] really come about by chance? Or are there other areas within a person's life that point to the emergence of a change, and dance just happened to be along as the catalyst for that change. In other words, is there such a thing as a chance encounter? Difficult to predict is the level of influence and change that is possible, as this can only be known and expressed by the individual by whom it has been experienced. What is recognised however, is through the process of interacting in the world, moments are sometimes met that have the possibility to change the course of life events, in a manner that has a lasting effect or consequence. It is the investigation of these moments, unexpected and otherwise, as related to dance that contributes to this research.

1.8.2 Experience

As the largest of the three categories, experience occupies an overarching role and constant through-line. Whereas an encounter serves as a form of impactful meeting, anthropologist Rodger Abrahams (1986) considers an experience to be a form of expansion from an encounter which provides a greater sense of knowledge and awareness. Similar to an encounter, there is a division between those experiences that are mundane and exist on the level of the unconscious, and those which cause a break in the everyday routine of living. It is a result of the variety of experiences and their interpretations that allow the participants to verbalise what they have learned from past to present. As such, the concept of experience is complex and varied according to its contextual placement. Anthropologist Edward Bruner describes experience as, 'an ongoing temporal flow of reality received by consciousness, where consciousness is understood more broadly than simply as cognition' (Bruner 1986:6). Experience frames individual moments and meanings, as well as larger cultural views, providing opportunities for 'being in the world…in its embodied, socio-cultural, political, and…intercultural dimensions' (Willen and Seeman 2012:1). Fuller viewed experience as something that was inescapably intertwined with the events of life. He considered experience to be the place from which to begin, and the way forward when asking and answering questions both personal and professional. There was the expectation that the responses he received from those with whom he interacted be based on both their individual and combined experiences, allowing for the outcome to 'enlarge my experience by the experiences of others' (Fuller 1982:223). By classifying experiences as

being finite, with clearly delineated points of beginning and ending, these temporal markers serve as a frame that allow for the 'differentiated cognitions, recognitions, and comprehensions' (ibid:223) that are the internal elements existing as a result of the experience.

Like a kaleidoscope, in that the shape keeps changing even if the parts remain the same, the investigation into experience contains varied descriptions and opinions based upon the discipline from which the research originates. It touches all areas, both internal and external, of existence, and is therefore a recurring theme when researching people and their lives. Subjective in nature, experiences cross cultural, psychological, religious, and personal boundaries, and are the building blocks that work together to create the whole of a life. Classified in the Oxford English Dictionary as both a noun and a verb[39], experience acts as both a structural unit containing tangible meaning, and a complex encounter or activity in which a person is a participant. They are the happenings through which knowledge is acquired, the lens through which decisions are made, and the moments that range from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

1.8.3 Ordinary and Extraordinary

For this research, encounter and experience merge when considering them as the interconnecting boundaries in which stories reside. Considering the definition for encounter given above, many of the participants singled out a memorable and often unexpected moment of dancing, and as such, a distinctive classification of ordinary versus extraordinary began to emerge. An

[39] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experience (accessed July 12, 2015)

ordinary experience is that which takes place without a special or distinguishing conscious recognition; everyday practical events that bear no important recall. Extraordinary experiences, in contrast, are the extension of an encounter that seems to "come out of nowhere", are consciously identified after they occur, leave a lasting effect or discerning imprint, and involve detailed verbal recall long after the experience has taken place (Turner and Bruner 1986, Abraham 1986). When examining the structure of an experience, philosopher John MacMurray allocates the titles of 'utility and intrinsic' saying that it is not the experience itself, but the *value* of the experience, and the knowledge that is sought as a result, that makes it stand apart. (MacMurray [1936] 1971:9) 'Special case' (Fuller 1982:226) is the term used by Fuller when distinguishing how the brain stores and recalls experiential information. He asserts that, because of their temporal nature, all experiences have the potential to be 'special-case', but because of new experiences continually entering the "brain-bank", some experiences become more special than others,

> Amongst a plurality of brain-stored, newly understood experiences, mind has, from time to time, discovered greater and more significant understandings, which in their turn as discoveries…constitute *very* special-case experiences to be stored in the recallable and reconsiderable brain-bank's wealth of special-case experiences.
>
> (Fuller 1982:226)

It is these 'recallable and reconsiderable' moments where 're-cognition…generates a matrix continuum of time consciousness' (Fuller 1982:224), allowing for the further discovery of the "self", and the possibilities for growth and new knowledge provided by the experience.

Abrahams posits that the conscious recognition between experiences classified as ordinary or extraordinary results from the personal need to contemplate the self and the world from these points of view. Through the process of reflection upon these experiences, a person allows them to grow in importance as both a part of the personal perception of identity, and also as a recognition of his/her place within a larger organisation or culture. Thus, the construction of identity is further shaped through the narrative process of sharing an experience with others, further solidifying the understanding of the differences between that which is individually unique and/or culturally embedded,

> …experience tells us that what happens to us is never so original, especially when we must discuss it. This discussion makes us all the more sensitive to the ways we ourselves are not so original, especially as we recognize ourselves as members of a generation, a network, a community.
>
> (Abrahams 1986:50)

Abraham's above point was solidified in the interview process when the participants discovered that there were others who were speaking about an extraordinary experience with dance that bore a resemblance to their own. Their responses varied, but it was not unusual for there to be a change in tone upon comprehending that what was thought to be unique, might be less so to me after hearing similar narrations. What may have been perceived as elite, might now be considered not as special. However, who has the right to approve or disprove an experience as being atypical; the individual having understood the change in himself, or those to whom authority to judge such a situation has been given? To this Abrahams posits that each of us possess an

awareness of what is being experienced from both an internal and external perspective. He contends that '…we participate in the action, but also report about it… (Abrahams 1986:14), and through this lens are able to serve as both participant and audience; learning about the experience from the perspective of both an individual and member of a culture or group. Therefore, there is an understanding that the notion of uniqueness is limited, and the significance is merely an application to the circumstances of each individual.

Anthropologist Victor Turner, in his text, *From Ritual to Theatre*, explores the differences between ordinary and extraordinary experience in relation to his theories of 'social drama' (Turner 1982: 69). Turner supposes that all cultures possess a form of dramatic unfolding: 'breach', 'crisis', 'redress', and either 'reintegration or irreparable breach' (ibid: 69-71). Through these phases, he argues that personal experiences parallel the larger recurrent cultural frames of reference through which individuals negotiate their personal lives. Consequently, people are constantly cycling through processes which produce new opportunities for learning. Turner's methodology on the subject was inspired by the work of the German hermeneutic philosopher and psychologist Wilhelm Dilthey. Framing his ideas about human experience through Dilthey's concept of "Erlebnis" meaning 'what has been lived through', (ibid:12) Turner hypothesised that experience not only exists as a verbal re-telling, but is also expressed through the means of 'images and impressions' (Bruner 1986:5). Words, desires, actions, feelings and visualisations all play a part in creating and recounting an experience; but what sets each person's description apart are the ways that they express the event in a manner that is relevant only to their personal points of reference. Dilthey differentiates

between the two by creating the classifications of “expression” and “experience”. An expression is described as ‘encapsulations of the experiences of others…’ (Dilthey 1976, in Bruner and Turner 1986: 3), and experience is divided into categories of “experience” and “an experience”.

> …the former is received by consciousness, it is an individual experience, the temporal flow; the latter is the intersubjective articulation of experience, which has a beginning and an ending and this becomes transformed into an expression.
>
> (Bruner 1986: 6)

By allowing an experience to be transformed into an expression, it then becomes an entity existing on its own outside of the realm of self-reference. Psychologist John Dewey continues this frame of thinking by saying,

> We have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment. Then and only then is it integrated in the general stream of experience and other experiences…Such an experience is whole and carries with it its own individualising quality and self-sufficiency.
>
> (Dewey 1939:35)

Take for example the story of research participant Ralph. At the age of twenty-two while studying Spanish in Spain, he happened upon a small venue where flamenco singing and dancing was being performed. Within his personal life, he was mourning the death of a long-time friend and former partner, and connected with what he perceived to be the sadness portrayed by the performers. He claims that his experience throughout and as a result of the performance was not only an empathetic response to their emotional expressions, but a new awareness that emerged within himself.

Ralph, 25: USA

I remember sitting at the table that night and just watching this dancer. And for some reason or another, I don't remember, at that point in my life – with dance, with percussion, with Spanish – and the emotion of my boyfriend passing, I just sat there and thought, 'this is what I have to do'…I saw this and said 'I have to find a way and incorporate this…to do this in my life...I don't know that it was any one thing specifically, it was that everything in my life coalesced to that being the perfect art form… I found with flamenco, in that moment and the weeks following, as I started to think more and more about it, it just encompassed everything that I loved in my life. All of my passions were there. And I think in that specific moment, I think I was in a very raw place in my life, so I think…I connected with it – at a very emotionally vulnerable level of, there are these singers right now, crying and moaning and grieving. I don't remember the lyrics of the song they were singing that night, but most likely about someone who died, and it was the power and energy behind flamenco specifically that drew me to it… flamenco just called me… I think you find that with a lot of flamenco dancers, they talk about being in very vulnerable places in their lives, raw places, and flamenco kind of grabs them and then doesn't let go. Um, and that's sort of what I felt. And even in the four months that I didn't take flamenco in Madrid, I still - it was always there, I kept going back to that tablao. Yeah, it kind of just captured me in a way, and really didn't want to let go as much as I tried to shake it off!... I think within a few weeks of moving back to [the United States]*…I started taking flamenco classes.*

The individual *experience* had begun when Ralph connected empathetically with the dancers and singers at the flamenco performance. It was later transformed into *an experience* when he began engaging with dancers and teachers in classes on an intersubjective level. Ralph's initial identification with the dancers inspired him to integrate flamenco into his life, which he now shares when he performs flamenco, allowing audiences to engage in an encapsulated moment with both the internal and external *expression*. Each of these pieces has been taken one step further by engaging in an academic study of flamenco where he is required to narrate, in both verbal and written forms, his embodied experiences as a dancer. Here again the cycle continues as he relates to his experiences from a new perspective, and relays his discoveries to both his teachers and colleagues.

Bruner, Turner's collaborator on the edited volume, *The Anthropology of Experience* (1986), points out in his chapter titled, *Experience and Its Expressions*, that the notion of experience and expression are not without problems, and he encourages further research on the subject within the study of the anthropology of experience. Seen through the lens of both the dialogic and dialectic, the external and internal, experience and expression lend elements of structure by contributing to the overall integration of the narrative from the perspective of our own understanding, as well as shedding light upon defining events in history, culture, and the performing arts (Bruner 1986:6). Critical to the overall understanding is the ability to distinguish between experience, expression and their correlation to reality. Bruner brings together each of these realms of perspective by stating,

> The critical distinction…between reality (what is really out there, whatever may be), experience (how that presents itself to consciousness), and expressions (how individual experience is framed and articulated). In a life history…the distinction is between life as lived (reality), life as experienced (experience), and life as told (expression).
>
> (Bruner 1986:6)

The emphasis in the above statement is of an interconnected triad that is constantly influencing reality, recollection, and retelling. Bruner notes that reality is both reconstructed and co-constructed, with 'inevitable gaps' taking place as reality, experience, and expression hold the possibility of shifting temporality. '…an expression is never an isolated, static text. It always involves a processual activity, a verb form, an action rooted in a social situation with real persons…' (ibid: 7). People are constant creators of new

experiences that that revolve within the cyclical pattern of experience, and expression. The challenge being, how to create definable units or frames within which each experience can autonomously exist, but can continue to connect to other experiences. Returning to the example of Ralph - his initial encounter with flamenco stands as an autonomous and clearly defined unit of experience, but also serves as a frame through which his reality of dance training was brought about, with the eventual sharing taking place in the form of performance and academic pursuits. Each piece can stand on its own, but they also contain a continual flow resulting in a series of connected moments. Bruner posits that life is a contained series of events occupying a place in an ordered sequence. He states, 'Experience and meaning were in the present, the past was a memory…and the future was always open…' (ibid: 8) It is a form of processual perspective which allows each experience to hold its place and autonomy, existing as a piece of the overall whole. This is where Dilthey's notion of "experience" and "an experience" is useful. As stated above, "experience" is seen as existing as an individual event, but containing a temporal flow allowing it to connect to other experiences. "An experience" is a clearly defined set of intersubjective expressions that are articulated in such a manner that can be accessible to both the individual and those receiving the narrative. It is through narration that "an experience" is transformed into an expression with a clearly defined beginning and ending (ibid: 6). Bruner takes this idea of creating units of memory a step further by articulating that, 'We create the units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life' (ibid: 7), and it is through the assigned meaning that a specific event or experience is framed or categorised for future retelling. In this way, each new experience

takes on a measure of both the implicit and explicit as the memory takes its place based as the desired and assumed meaning assigned by the individual.

Sociologist David Yarmane argues that those who study experience are automatically hindered in their process by being excluded from the originating moment in 'real time and its physical, mental, and emotional constituents' (Yarmane 2000:171). He maintains that the conventional methods used by past sociological theorists simply 'reflects on the nature of experience' instead of investigating the experience itself and the resultant accumulation of meaning (ibid: 174). His solution is to address the study of experience through the use of narrative, with the understanding that the story is in itself a unit of measure which is separate from the reality of the lived experience. Recognising the ephemeral quality inherent in verbal expressions, Yarmane suggests that experience needs to be measured from a qualitative perspective incorporating a linguistic representation of the past, which takes into consideration the temporal circumstances, and the accumulated meaningful accounts acquired throughout the process of living. He states,

> …because experiencing is an ongoing temporal flow, its objective existence is fleeting. By the time the individual comes to understand the experience, it has past. What remains is a memory, the interpretation, the linguistification, the recounting, the emplotment, the narrativization. This the "data" which sociologists must study.
>
> (Yarmane 2000:184)

In conjunction with this line of thinking, and because the data to be studied for my research is based solely on stories and memories, the interview technique known as 'explicitation' was investigated (Maurel 2009). Designed to access an experience 'not as it is conceived, but… that is close to that which is

actually occurring in, through and during an activity…' (Gore et. al, 2014: 129), explicitation interviews work to access and support the participant through the process of transitioning from 'pre-reflective consciousness to reflective consciousness'; the goal being the re-experiencing of the lived moment, rather than simply accessing the memory of the moment (Maurel 2009: 59, 60). While useful in theory, a key piece to utilizing this type of technique is an intense training programme. Although I was able to participate[40], the opportunity came about after most of the interviews had been completed. Therefore, the interviews for this research were "explicitation inspired" and my own line of questioning was developed with the intention of helping the participant recall in detail, a distinct moment in time, keeping the purpose and context of the interview in line with the explicitation ideals. This type of interview technique is associated with embodied practice in that a particular line of questioning can be developed to elicit the description of bodily sensations. Again, the expectation is that the memory will be accessed beginning with the moment of pre-reflection, moving temporally through to the end of the experience. In the case of the explicitation inspired interviews used in this research, the basic pattern was followed, as set up by French psychologist Pierre Vermersch (as suggested in Gore et. al, 2014), of beginning the interview by asking for general knowledge about their lives and experiences of coming to dance, and slowly moving towards eliciting the 'verbal description of the lived experience in action…namely emotions, senses, and thoughts.' (Gore et. al, 2012:136). Thus, the use of narrative creates a tangible structure from which to realise the experience, while still

[40] The technique originated in France and was therefore only conducted in French. In 2015 I attended the training at the University of Roehampton, which was only the second time it was taught in English.

recognising the subjective essence inherent to the telling. By keeping at the forefront of the investigation the understanding of the benefits as well as the limits of language as a means for measure, the overall meaning can be interpreted on a story-by-story basis. In this way, the tangible nature of each experience remains at the forefront, but also fits within the boundaries of an event.

1.8.4 Event

An event is a happening that exists within time, that involves and is influenced by external interactions, is regarded as having a specific purpose or overarching theme but is made up of many parts and pieces, and acts as a frame for the examination of an experience on scales both large and small (Abrahams 1986, Badiou 2007, Fuller 1982, Ronstrom 1989). For the purposes of this research, an event is conceived as a social and interactive structure that allows for the construction of meaning out of a personal experience. The participants were asked to recall specific moments in their life where encounters and experiences with dance and dancing have resulted in what they consider to be significant changes in their life. Memory recollection provides information and insight, but can be perceived as nebulous and in need of a more situated structure. By situating memories as events, a general and more tangible framework is established. Furthering this will be the use of the dance event as a contextual viewpoint.

A key conceptual feature of an event is the notion of time; the measurement and examination of the parts of an event as being something both existing within, standing apart, and progressing through, time (Ronstrom 1989, Deleuze 2004). Philosopher Michel Foucault posits that an event has clearly

defined points of beginning and ending, and that all human experiences, activities, ideas and interactions can be evaluated as a series of events (Foucault 1966 [1996]). Anthropologist Edward T. Hall writes about time as a form of categoriser for life and experience, with each culture functioning within definitive and different understandings of time. Comparing the cultural association a person has within a framework of time as something akin to 'a language...a primary organiser for all activities…a way of handling priorities and organising experience…' (Hall 1983:3), he sees each experience as falling within categories of time and differentiates between them. Philosopher Frederick Schmitt speaks of the properties of an event as something that stands alone, all the elements defined, within a specific moment of time. He also relates the progression and changes within an event as something that has the quality of "unfolding". 'Unfolding…is a particular way of having definitive location in time. (Schmitt 1983: 285). Within the process of unfolding, an event moves through the states of change, developing through the structure of time, and is 'not complete until its final moment…' (ibid: 285) It is this progression that he terms 'coming into being' (ibid: 285) that allows all the elements present within an event to finally exist in their entirety.

Dance ethnologist Owe Ronstrom considers the flow of an event as a temporal progression, with each of the parts connecting to the other with a continuous connection from one moment to the next within a processional order. Similar to Bruner and Dilthey and the flow between experiences, his concept reflects that an event has a fluidity from past, present, to future, placing it under the umbrella of a large comprehensive combined experience. Alternately, sociologist Erving Goffman speaks about the nature of a [social]

event or activity in terms of smaller, constructed frames and brackets. He argues that an event is,

> Activity framed in a particular way…often marked off from the ongoing flow of surrounding events by a special set of boundary markers or brackets of a conventional kind. These occur before and after the activity in time and may be circumscriptive in space; in brief, there are temporal and spatial brackets.
>
> (Goffman 1974: 251-252)

Within the structure of Goffman's presentation of event bracketing, there are scheduled and unscheduled choices made by the collective or individual participants that reflect social and cultural norms, along with the defined portioning of a defined activity (Ibid). Anthropologist Gregory Bateson suggests through a 'psychological frame' (Bateson 1972: 186) meaning is constructed between individuals, and provides a context for experience. These frames can exist in forms that are both conscious and unconscious, implicit and explicit, internal and external, and allow individuals to move through the world in an interpretive way that allows for more concrete comprehension. 'the actual physical frame is…added by human beings to physical pictures because these human beings operate more easily in a universe in which some of their psychological characteristics are externalised' (ibid: 184). Therefore, each experience can be 'framed' as both small stand-alone moments, as well as a piece of a larger whole.

What each of these authors contends, is the distinction that an event serves as a guidepost or temporal moment in which a certain 'something' occurs, which resides within a larger framework of experience. As suggested by Goffman and Bateson, by bracketing or breaking down the pieces of the

larger whole into smaller elements for analysis, a clearer picture of the event, and its place within a larger experience, can emerge. For the purposes of this discussion, the event will be referred to within the realms of social activity/performance and human experience. The inclusion of the dance event will continue to narrow the focus, providing an additional context through which the participant's experience can be framed.

1.8.5 The Dance Event

The value of a dance event from an anthropological perspective is that it places the dance experience within the context of a larger whole, within either a social or cultural structure. Dance scholar Anya Peterson Royce writes that,

> This is the great strength of the anthropological approach to dance. It is the only way of measuring true significance of dance in any group or society because it is the only approach that looks at the totality into which dance fits.
>
> (Peterson Royce [1977] 2015: 13)

The dance event is often seen as a representational microcosm of culture, presenting roles and relationships through a codified ritual or dance; 'In this small way, a window to a more complex world is revealed' (Kealiinohomoku 1972:381). Anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku speaks about a microcosm as being an 'epitome' or smaller version of the larger society, but also recognises that, '…dance is not a total reproduction of holistic culture…it selectively reveals the culture…' (ibid: 382), therefore requiring the need for in depth research into both the culture as a whole, and all the dancing within that larger culture. She goes on to say that each event and its representation of a

culture must be analysed as if with a clean slate, for the roles and areas of importance to one group may be exactly the opposite in another.

The term 'dance event' and its defined concept is often credited to Kealiinohomoku (Fuller Snyder 1978, Davida 2011).[41] Discussed in her unpublished dissertation, *Theory and Methods for an Anthropological Study of Dance* (1976), she defines it as,

> …a discrete entity with a beginning, middle, and end, and it partitions off a portion of time for its duration. It is performed simultaneously within a complex of activities, but it does not have a pervasive ongoing flow within which everyday cultural activities are pursued. Dance commands a period of focus, a heightening of some aspect of the culture in a super-ordinary way.
>
> (Kealiinohomoku 1976: 42)

A dance event therefore maintains the above definition of an "event" in that it contains a recognized length of time, is set within a series of activities, but with the dance activity being the central focus.

Kealiinohomoku speaks about the necessary and elementary questions needed when approaching the study of a dance event. She posits that the study of dance as it is situated within a dance culture, community, situation or event is reliant upon a thorough investigation including, 'the answering of the journalistic questions of who? what? when? where? and why? The what-when-where-and-why complex can be analysed in terms of concept and phenomenon, time, space, and function, respectively' (ibid: 238). She discusses the need for the examination of the event from all perspectives, not

[41] https://denadavida.ca/articles/kealiihonomokus-legacy/ (Accessed 12 June, 2014)

just the dance and dancers, but all those who are a part of the creation and implementation of the entire event.

Ronstrom describes a dance event as,

> …an interactional unit which can be perceived as something extraordinary, which stands out from the flow of everyday life. It is limited in time and space… It is a type of encounter to which people have come for special reasons, with certain anticipations, and the event is structured in accordance with its visual, cognitive and kinetic focus, the dancing and music making.
>
> (Ronstrom, 1989: 23)

He continues by pointing out that the three main usages for the word dance '1) as a verb – to dance; 2) as a noun. The result of dancing, the object – a dance; 3) as a term for the whole social occasion where dances are danced.' (ibid: 21), might give greater insight into understanding the physical and social interpretations of a dance event. He concludes that it is the third definition, which is related to a social occasion, gives the most relevance upon which to base an analysis of a dance event. Dance ethnologist Elsie Dunin continues this argument by saying, '…the underlying denominator is that the dancing is the means to social interactions and interchanges that do not occur at any other time within their respective communities' (Dunin 1989: 30).

The dance event as a structured social interaction is a continuous theme, and several scholars reference the importance the dance event plays in the bringing together of the many different levels represented within a community. Again, to reference Dunin, '…the dancing at a dance event is the only moment that allows for physical touching and social verbal/gestural interchanges among the multi-generations, multi-age groups, multi-social

groupings attending one event' (ibid: 31). This statement also promotes the idea that the dance event is multi-structured both in terms of the participants, the dancing, and external elements and should be analysed as such. By defining and examining each of these aspects, the overall social framing of the dance "event" reveals and expands the areas for investigation, allowing for the beginnings of a contextual framework, or expanded reasoning as to the "why" the dance event is taking place. In this way, it became a useful tool, allowing for the recognition that an event can be perceived as somehow special, with a stand-alone quality related specifically to dance and dancing. Thus, as shown in the interlude between parts one and two of the thesis, the recognition and division of the participant's stories into distinct events and dance events served as a way to distinguish and develop the prominent themes and patterns. Through the examination of the narratives, and separation of the events, clear strands could be identified and classified, creating further connections used in the overall data analysis. In this way, the difficult process of creating a critical distance could be created, allowing for the evidence to come to the forefront.

1.9 Research Challenges

So passionate were the individuals about the perceived changes in their lives as a result of discovering forms of dance that it was difficult not to become caught up in their enthusiasm. As a lover of dance and one who believes that dancing can enact positive change in people's life, it was challenging to create the type of distance to ensure 'that the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:90). Psychologist Ruthellen Josselson

refers to the need for the creation of an ‘empathetic stance’ when collecting narratives, which allows the researcher,

> …a way of approaching data that allows for discovery rather than seeks confirmation of hypotheses and that fosters more exhaustive quests for explanation rather than the illusion of finding pre-existing truth. If we listen well, we will unearth what we did not expect. This becomes the paradigm for discovery.
>
> (Josselson 1995:30)

The exposure to this concept became a way of being able to step back and ‘listen well’ (ibid), instead of being influenced by both my pre-existing thoughts and assumptions, and their passionate and persuasive arguments. It was in this way that the greatest discoveries began to centre more on to what was being said (or not said), as well as their stories about dancing.

Sociologist Susan E. Chase recommends looking for what she terms ‘submerged stories’ (Chase 2004:291) when examining narratives. These include issues mentioned casually, patterns that form an informational back-story, or other processes that offer clues as to the larger whole. For example, several participants mentioned that their involvement in dance and dancing serving as a form of avoidance from their real lives. Although usually mentioned casually, or with a light-hearted tone, it exposed an undertone that included the possibility for a *need* for escape, which was contradictory to the surface story of a wonder filled life as a result of dancing. Similarly, issues related to variations of identity, in terms of the creation of a new “character” while dancing were also brought up, again placing the dancing world into one of fantasy, and outside of reality, such as McMains (2007) suggests in her study of ballroom dance and dancers. Others spoke about the metamorphosis

that occurred with the process of changing from their work to dance attire, almost in terms of shedding one skin for another.

Other clues to submerged scenarios included references to dance in terms of an obsession or addiction, with each opportunity seen as a way to feed their dependence. This prompted questions about the need for such an outlet, as well as an interest about how that was achieved prior to engaging with dance; was one addiction simply replacing another? Some spoke about their discovery in terms of a religious experience with a paranormal type of epiphany turning into a devotion that was similar to worshipping a divine entity. Although three of the participants are members of the clergy and spoke about dancing as being an important part of their spiritual life, others referred to dance as '*my religion'* as a way of indicating the importance that it held. This began to happen so often, that for a while the research shifted towards investigating the topic of conversion, especially related to religious narratives which communicated experiences related to crisis and redemption, and mirrored many of the patterns found in the stories of the participants. To counteract this notion of what could have been perceived as a leaning towards religiosity, transformative learning theory was utilised as it is grounded in adult developmental processes instead of religious experience.

While the theme of conversion assists at times in this discussion, it does not form the foundation as there are other approaches that are more appropriate to the whole of the research. The topic, however, exposed a distinctive pattern in the narratives that contributed to an understanding of the important role and meaning given to dance and the place it holds in the participants' lives. It also raised questions about the timing of their discovery of dancing: did dance

itself cause the perceived transformation, or was it a response to peripheral factors such as a crisis or the need for a life change? Could participation in another activity have produced the same reaction? These questions begin to form the basis for the data analysis and discussion that is developed later in the thesis.

This chapter introduced the project, aims, research questions, and conceptual and theoretical considerations being utilised in this research. The synergetic perspectives of Buckminster Fuller and Allegra Fuller Snyder served as a theoretical starting place and inspiration, allowing for the need for the research to be grounded in a holistic perspective to be recognised. Transformative learning theory was introduced and serves as the primary theoretical lens. Based on a constructivist model for adult learning and experience, it provides a multi-tiered approach through which the stories of the participants can be investigated and analysed. As the participants engage with a variety of dance forms, a discussion offering a variety of perspectives regarding a definition for dance was presented. In order to encapsulate what is a contextually broad and problematic term, both physically and verbally, the definition offered by dance anthropologist Joanne Kealiinohomoku was chosen. Her simple and somewhat generic interpretation allows for the Anglo/American perspective of the participants to be honoured, as well as acting as an inclusive umbrella under which the chosen dance forms can reside. Also discussed were “the three E’s” – encounter, experience, and event, each of which features throughout the research. The concept of an encounter as something that produces an unexpected or new awareness is used to support the narratives of the participants, and is further discussed in

Chapter Four. Experience occupies an overarching position throughout the thesis and serves as both connector and developer of meaning in regards to activities in which one is a participant. By examining experiences in smaller units or events, the stories are examined and considered from a variety of frameworks and viewpoints. Thus each of the three ‘E’s’ work together to support and contribute to the examination and of the data presented by the participants. Chapter two presents the methodological considerations, research choices for fieldwork, participant recruitment, and analytical frames. It also begins to familiarise the reader with the participants through examples of their voices and stories. The chapter concludes with a discussion of sociologist Robert Stebbins’ theory of serious and casual leisure, and the ways in which it represents the participants and their current dance practices.

Chapter Two – Methodology

2.1 Establishing the Methodological Field

At the start of the research, the original fieldwork process comprised of both ethnographic interviews and participant observation. Over time it was determined that the richest data lay primarily in the stories, and so the fieldwork deviated and became one that focused more on narrative collection, moving more towards fieldwork techniques of oral history. Although both qualitative methods present similar goals of highlighting the voices of individuals and groups, there can exist subtle differences in the representation of participants, examination of the data, and process of field research. Oral history refers to its process of gathering data as field research even though most projects of this type do not include the intense embedded social interactions that are often a hallmark of ethnographic fieldwork. “The field” then refers to a gathering together of individuals with common interests and backgrounds that are relevant to the chosen topic of research.

Anthropologist Micaela Di Leonardo lays out the similarities and differences between ethnography and oral history citing such areas as cross cultural versus intracultural perceptions (Di Leonardo 1987:6), the role of the interviewer as integrated participant versus short-term acquaintance (ibid:4), and the interpretation of experiences as artefact versus narrative (ibid:4). But she writes that even with their scholarly differences, there are consistent forms of overlap or interrelatedness, or what anthropologist Clifford Geertz refers to as ‘blurred genres’, the crossing of boundaries between disciplines (Geertz 1980: 165). Oral histories often rely upon the researcher asking a

minimal number of questions, and letting the participants speak freely about their lives or the specific topic being studied. Within an ethnomethodological perspective, more formalised sets of questions are asked of the participants to elicit particular responses. Historian Jean Barman sees the two processes as working hand in hand when she explains that, for her the practice of participant-observation locates itself in either experience. She adds,

> The researcher must, for a time at least, participate "subjectively" in the world [of the participant]…However much he or she is "objectively" prepared according to the canons of research, the resulting experience inevitably combines participation with observation, subjectivity with objectivity.
>
> (Barman 1989: 9)

Barman further differentiates between the two when observing that ethnography focuses more on what is happening in the present moment, while oral history tends to be more reliant on recalled past experiences. Both methods however, are active approaches (Thompson 2000) in which both researcher and participant take on interactive roles, no matter the methodological choice. Oral historian Steven High suggests that the gap between the disciplines is continually shifting, overlapping, and narrowing especially as the interview processes and written outcomes place the researcher more and more in the subjective or reflexive role (High 2013: 8). No matter the discipline, at the heart of the research should be the voice of the participant. Di Leonardo remarks,

> Ethnography and oral history have two important and related features in common, one bearing on theory and one on method. Theoretically, each field is founded upon a progressive impulse to give voice to the voiceless, to value the lives that contemporary ideology renders deficient, trivial – or invisible.
>
> (Di Leonardo 1987: 3)

My research drew from aspects found in both fields. For example, in accordance with an ethnographic type of study, the names of the participants were anonymised and have been assigned pseudonyms. Specific names of dance companies and organizations have also been removed (as much as possible) to protect the identities of the participants. Of the thirty-eight-people interviewed, only a handful pointedly requested to remain anonymous. In such instances, the reasons given were the need for their dance life and story to remain separate from their professional identities, and the disclosure of sensitive information about past experiences.

In traditional ethnography, researchers embed themselves for a period of time in the field, meaning the location or group which the researchers choose as the focal point for their investigation, and engaging in what Geertz refers to as ‘deep hanging out’ (Geertz 1998: n.p.). Although this research cannot be considered a traditional ethnographic project because of the lack of deep and ongoing engagement with the participants, it still utilised ethnographic methods and terminology. However, as pointed out by anthropologist Ina-Maria Greverus (2003), the idea of what constitutes a field is continually changing and needs to be expanded to accommodate changes in societal norms. She contends,

> In the face of the self-evident and often accelerated mobility of people, things and ideas, this model has come to be challenged. In particular, it has become evident that everyday life is not necessarily lived in situ. Rather, it is lived not only in the different physical places and spaces that people inhabit – which themselves are likely to be more numerous – but also in mediated spaces, such as those provided by the internet and television…
>
> (Greverus 2003: 3)

In the spirit of this statement, the field for this research is such that it resides on multiple levels and dimensions, including the physical location of the participants and researcher, as well as within virtual space. Rather, this research is similar in concept to what anthropologist Georgiana Gore refers to when she speaks about the field as 'a conceptual and not an empirical space' (Gore 1999: 210), in that its existence is one that is based more upon transient moments of interaction, rather than long-term embedded field research. The field therefore, includes all the above-mentioned areas, with the primary data gathered from the stories collected from the participants in person or with Skype interviews. Secondary research included attending performances, dance classes, or other dance or movement based interactions with the participants when possible. As several of the participants live outside of either London or the UK, attending these events were only possible with those who were in the London metropolitan area. However, as the research progressed, I realised that these meetings are representative of their present place as dancers, and my interest lay in the happenings that led them to *becoming* such dance participants. Their existing practice is the delineative ending to their current story, rather than a representation of the trajectory of their experience. These interactions with them apart from the interviews was not without value, because they did provide additional context and insight into

who the participants are as dancers, the dance forms that they discussed in detail, and the types of personal interactions that were often included as an important aspect of their lives. For those with whom this was not possible, every effort was made to see them dancing, and this was mostly provided through video clips, online interviews (other than the initial interview time together), or photographs. If none of these were available, I asked the participant to provide me with photographs or video examples of their chosen dance form. These virtual interactions led me to investigate further "digital fieldwork" opportunities such as social media and other online resources.

2.1.1 Utilising the Digital Field: Skype, Facebook, and YouTube as Ethnographic Tools

The last decade has seen a rise in the use of, 'digital ethnography' (Pink et. al 2016), offering possibilities within qualitative inquiries for researchers to extend their field. With the steadily increasing availability of access to the internet globally, using digital mediums as research tools has become increasingly popular. Benefits include financial savings in terms of travel, increased efficiency in regards to the amount of time spent gathering data, and issues surrounding safety and meeting locations (Evans et al. 2008, Hanna 2012). Several studies have shown that because the internet as a tool for communication has become so commonplace, the immediacy of live video transmission using tools such as Skype or Facetime, produced results that were no different than that of a live, in person interview (Hanna 2012, Sullivan 2012, Hallett and Barber 2014).

According to social ethnographers Ronald E. Hallett and Kristen Barber, it is

important that twenty-first century researchers begin to utilise online methods because,

> …people now occupy online as well as physical "habitats", and these spaces have become important for the creation and reproduction of relationships, identities, and social locations…Online spaces no longer rest at the periphery of life, but are central to and have fundamentally transformed the ways people around the world go about their daily business.
>
> (Hallett and Barber 2014:307)

Critics of the use of digital methods claim that within traditional ethnography, the researcher must embed himself within the environment and lives of those being studied, and cite increased ethical challenges such as clarity of consent, privacy, and confidentiality (Salmons 2012:27). Proponents recognise that online tools are not meant to replace the ethnological methods of the past, but propose that time differences, financial resources, and technological developments make their use alongside them an important part of current ethnographic reality (see Murthy 2008, Hallett and Barber 2014).

The fifteen on-line interviews for this research were video recorded using *Call Recorder*, a Skype recording device. At the start of these digital interviews, the participants were verbally reminded that the conversation was being recorded, as there is no physical indicator present to them on their side of the call. This served as a benefit as the participant was often less aware and self-conscious of being recorded, than those filmed with a video camera. Such methods however are not without their issues. Difficulties related to technical malfunctions such as call dropping, poor internet connection, and delayed video relay can be common, and need to planned for (Hanna 2012). In the Skype interviews used for this research, there were a few instances of

technical malfunctions, but the possibility of such issues was addressed at the start of the conversation, and were met without any effect when they occasionally occurred. Due to the current and frequent use of these forms of technology by many people, the possibility of technical difficulties is a standard norm, and in each of the few instances encountered where a re-connection needed to occur, it was met with a laugh and quick continuation back into the discussion. In comparison, in several live face to face interviews, there were interruptions that halted the discussion for several minutes, and in both instances the mood of the conversation was altered more profoundly than in the situations requiring electronic transmission.

I also found that other digital “fields” such as YouTube and Facebook yielded contributory information. The use of the internet, especially via social media and other user generated content sites, has also begun to alter the ways in which ethnographic methods such as fieldwork can be carried out. Increased online presence as a representative part of everyday lives can provide further pieces of information beyond the one on one interview. Garcia et. al contend that the internet and social media now play such an integrated role in our daily existence that contemporary research, ‘should include technologically mediated communication, behaviour, or artefacts’ (Garcia et. al, 2009: 57). For example, the use of Facebook as a research tool is multi-faceted; it offers an avenue to recruit participants using Facebook forums specifically related to adult dance groups, it serves as a form of communication with participants, and it provides continued conversation and information after the formal interview. Of the three methods for recruitment, the first and third facets were the most important aspects, with the second used to a lesser extent.

When initially looking for participants I posted paper flyers at dance schools who specialised in adult classes, and received one response. I then e-mailed or called studios and again received notification from one person who was interested. At the recommendation of a friend, I posted my call for participants on Facebook forums for adult dance groups in the London area and received almost two dozen responses within a few days of the posting. Although only a handful arranged times with me to be interviewed, I believe that the positive response rate came about because of the convenience of using a web based interface. It quickly reached a large number of people, and allowed them to respond in a manner that was timely and without much stress or effort. Facebook also provided valuable opportunities to follow, view, and continue to interact with the participants both before and after the formal interview. Several run their own dance studios or dance related businesses and have Facebook or web pages connected to these organizations. In a few cases the information on the web was reviewed before conducting the interview, but I later decided that I preferred to approach the participant with no preconceived notions. I did, however, find them very useful after the interviews as a means for contextual reference for particular comments, as well as a way to continue the dialogue, both visually and verbally. As many of the participants lived geographically away from my locale, access to them through social media served to dissolve the distance barriers. Ethnographer Sally Baker states that the use of Facebook in her ethnographic research,

> …facilitated communication between the researcher and participants across geospatial and temporal boundaries, which may have hindered researchers relying on more "traditional forms" of maintaining contact.
>
> (Baker 2013: 140)

For example, my research participant Deklen lives in Germany and runs a tango school from his home. At the time of the interview he was in the process of creating the studio, which involved such things as the removal of an interior wall. I have followed and continued to interact with him through social media, and have engaged with him and the progress and construction of the school. Daniel is another participant with whom I have continued to interact with in London. He is continually furthering his career in teaching and performing, and social media has allowed me the opportunity to follow his progress and conduct a less formal form of digital fieldwork.

There are limitations within digital media interactions however, in that those interviewed run the risk of not being the “real” or “authentic” individual. The distance created via the computer allows for the presentation of themselves in any way they choose. Baker urges the researcher to be very clear with their position, being fully aware of the limitations of the online world, and ‘whether it is considered to be different from the offline world’ (Baker 2013: 132). Others argue (Hine 2000, Garcia et. al 2009) that the internet has integrated so fully into our lives that the reality of one over the other is inconsequential. Issues related to standards of ethics include the notion of privacy, the relationship between participant and ethnographer, and possible breaches in anonymity between participants. In the case of this research, many of the participants had Facebook pages that were strictly related to their dance activities or businesses, which did not reveal their personal identity. For those few participants who invited me to be friends on their personal Facebook pages, I felt the risk of the disclosure of their anonymity was quite low. As a dancer and dance researcher, many of the people that I interact with personally and

virtually are associated in some way to a dance community. In short, those who were participants simply blended in to what was already in existence. I also made sure to set the highest limits of privacy in regards to my personal information, requiring either party access only by searching for their individual page.[42] I was fully aware that by allowing for this gateway for communication I might be revealing myself to my participants, but found that it was not an issue, as most never commented or in fact, paid very much attention to my posts. In the end, the choice to use Facebook as a means for communication and contextual information served to further the conversations after the initial interview, and provided video and verbal updates deepening my understanding of their lives as dancers.

2.2 Details of the project participants

Thirty-eight people agreed to be interviewed, and range in age from twenty-five to seventy-nine years old; the largest numbers being either in their forties (9) and sixties (11). The majority of those interviewed currently live in either the United Kingdom and the United States, with three who are residents of Germany, Mexico, and India. Although all the participants represent an Anglo/American viewpoint, there are many who were born in other parts of the world and bring those perspectives to their stories as well.[43] The majority would be classified racially as white with the exception of three who identify themselves as Indian, Japanese, and Chinese-American. The level of education is at minimum a bachelor's degree, with fifty percent having a master's degree, and ten percent a doctorate. Many have degrees related to

[42] As opposed to allowing access via the general Facebook newsfeed.

[43] Both the country of birth and residence will be indicated when a participant is referenced in the text. For example, Motoko was born in Japan, but lives in the United States. Her reference will include – Motoko 40: Japan/USA.

dance, each of them acquired after their initial encounter with dance. Eighteen currently earn their living through a profession related to dance, with seven of those developing and leading their own dance companies or schools. Advertising, creating and running dance events was also spoken about, with three of the participants acting as dance DJs. The others do not make their living through dance, but most remarked that dance was their primary occupation outside of their employment. Some of their professions include: three who are clergy or members of a religious order, an astrophysicist, a Spanish language teacher, a journalist, an IT specialist for the United States Military, two former military officers, a retired accountant, two university lecturers, an English teacher, a professional pianist, a theatre designer, a corporate banker, and a journalist (See appendix G for a full list).

The recruitment materials did not specify that the participants be active in any style of dance, and the combination of those who self-selected to be a part of the research provided a variety of genres. Flamenco, 5Rhythms, Morris Dancing, Appalachian Clogging, Contemporary, Tango, Hip Hop [Popping, Freestyle], Shamanic Trance Dance, Dances of Universal Peace, Sacred Circle Dance, Lindy Hop, Swing Dance, Wheelchair Contemporary, Bharatanatyam, Yoga, Dance for Parkinson's, Vogue Fem, and International Folk Dance were all represented (see appendix D for a full list and description of these genres). Most of the forms listed are made up of a structured and codified form of steps and movements. The exceptions to this would be 5Rhythms, which is mainly improvisatory in its movement structure, yet contains five prescribed movement briefs that guide the patterns of moving; and shamanic trance dance, in which the dancer moves in self-constructed

ways to bring themselves into a trance state. The latter is a contemporary practice of movement and healing that does not seem to be based on any one specific tradition or formal trance based ritual.

For the majority of those interviewed, the dance genre that they consider to be "their dance" is the form to which they were initially introduced, and very few have moved away from their primary technique, doing so only if the other forms might help them to improve their already established skills. Those sought to be participants in the research were adults who believed their lives had been altered through their participation in dance. Unspecified on the recruitment information were details such as genre of dance, maximum age, and gender. This was done in the hope that a variety of self-selecting informants would step forward, creating a diverse group from which to collect data. It was also intended to focus on the tools of dance as a genre instead of one style. As such, it was discovered that the experience of dancing, no matter the form, produced similar effects and experiences.

2.3 YouTube Participants

Through a Google search of "Dance changed my life", I came across an online competition sponsored by several United States branches of the Fred Astaire ballroom dance studio chain[44]. The contest was titled, *How Ballroom Dancing Changed My Life*, and required each of the entrants to upload a three-minute video to YouTube[45] explaining how engaging in ballroom dance had an impact on their life, in the hopes of winning free ballroom dance lessons. As with other electronic mediums, YouTube has also become another

[44] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xI-W46norl8: (Accessed 9 September, 2016)
[45] YouTube is a 'video hosting service that features user generated content where registered users…can upload files containing video and unregistered…can view videos' (Chenall 2011: 229).

form of “field” in qualitative research.

According to Hanna et. al when referring to the use of YouTube as an ethnographic tool,

> Ethnography in its most basic form is watching, listening, and participating. So what is video, or more generically virtual, ethnography? It is watching, listening and being cognizant of how the recorder of the scenes chooses to represents what she/he is viewing.
>
> (Hanna et. al 2015: 54)

The Fred Astaire Studio competition videos were useful to this research as a comparison tool in that the stories they shared often touched upon the primary themes expressed in the interviews with the participants. This was mainly reflected in corresponding key words or phrases such as ‘dance family’, ‘community’, ‘transformed’, ‘dance changed my life’, etc. Although the primary data comes from the thirty-eight participant interviews, contributing information also includes insights from these YouTube videos. From an ethical standpoint, no revealing individual qualifiers will be attached as individual permission for use within this research was not specifically requested. When registering for a YouTube account, users are aware that the content they are uploading will be viewed by the general public and may be used for purposes outside of their personal control.[46] In this instance the data found in the YouTube videos is used as an additional avenue of information and confirmation of the patterns found within the stories if the “formal” research participants, and exist as such within the discussion.

[46] https://www.youtube.com/yt/copyright/fair-use.html#yt-copyright-four-factors: (Accessed 14 March, 2017)

2.4 Research Location(s)

As London is my current city of residence, it was chosen as the primary site for participant recruitment, falling into the ethnographic category of 'anthropology at home' (Jackson 1987:1). Half-way through the fieldwork, participants from the United States were also included, as were a few from India and other European countries. Most of the informants were located in their home countries (primarily the UK and US) at the time of their interview, but like me, some were not currently residing in their country of origin. Therefore, the research was largely undertaken from an Anglo-American or Western perspective, in that the educational and residential backgrounds of both the researcher and participants reflects such a point of view. Consequently, the definition of "home" is more reliant upon the shared personal background and lens, from which the information is interpreted, in conjunction with the participants and their actual physical location.

As the research progressed, it began to formulate itself into the categories of 'multi-local' (Hannerz 2003) and 'Yo Yo' (Wulff 2002: 117) fieldwork, as it involved situating the field of study within one or more areas, for smaller periods of time. Dance scholar Helena Wulff speaks about Yo Yo fieldwork as a way of coming and going within the fieldwork process, spending shorter amounts of time within a group instead of an extended period of up to a year (ibid). Similarly, the fieldwork for this investigation was conducted concurrently with other scholarly aspects of the research, taking place over a period of eighteen months. Differing from traditional immersive forms of fieldwork, some months saw more increased field research activity, while others included very

little. This dipping in and out was a result of the self-identification of participants, rather than my being embedded with one group or location.

Multi-local fieldwork involves placing one's self within a primary location, investigating the selected area to focus on more than one facet of the subject being researched, and drawing, 'on some problem, some formulation of a topic, which is significantly *trans*local, not to be confined within some single space' (Hannerz 2003:206). London is a city rich with dance classes and events from many different styles and so was thought to be a good fit for attracting participants from a range of backgrounds and genres. But with time, the field was extended to include participants in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the United Kingdom, whom I could interview via Skype. This decision broadened the background of participants, while staying within the boundaries of an Anglo-American/Western perspective. All the participants, no matter their locale, shared similar stories and experiences with dance and dancing, and in this way, are automatically connected, with the other aspects of their lives serving to enrich and deepen the similarities and differences in their stories. This is what anthropologist Ulf Hannerz refers to as 'the translocal linkages, and interconnections between those and whatever local bundles of relationships which are also a part of the study' (ibid: 206). Choosing a multi-local perspective also helped to support the holistic and humanistic hypotheses by allowing the research to highlight the areas most relevant to this study of dance and human experiences; the similarities in narrative, dance, and knowledge overshadowing those of location and profession.

2.5 Issues of Diversity

The broadening of the field came about after quite a bit of unexpected trial and error (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 128). I assumed that there would be plenty of people willing to be interviewed, and so I was taken aback when I experienced what Feldman et al. describes as a 'rude surprise' (Feldman et al. 2003: vii) when informants did not readily step forward. What seemed to be the obvious recruitment choice, attending classes to personally pitch the idea and request participants, was in fact counter-productive, and I found that students became very shy and almost embarrassed to come forward. On one occasion where the lunch break conversation included my request for participants, what had been an amiable group suddenly became extremely uncomfortable. Even though two people present had already been interviewed and spoke very positively of their experience to the other members of the group, they were met with teasing and derogatory comments. Thus, the potential informants did not materialise, and one later excused herself on the basis that she felt uncomfortable, remarking that her story would not be “right” for this research, but offering no specific reason as to why. This, it turned out, was quite a common feeling, and it was revealed by the participants that although they were comfortable and even proud of their involvement in/with dance, there was a certain amount of timidity and intimacy related to the circumstances of how they discovered dance and dancing. For those who experienced what they would consider to be a phenomenal or extra-ordinary (Bruner 1986) moment, it was rarely shared, and often difficult to put into words. Therefore, if the request for

participation came from a friend or reliable source, there was a built-in level of trust that was found in fewer situations where the recruitment was random and without a personal connection. These ‘gatekeepers’ (Kawulich 2010, Bernard 2011), became an essential part of the recruitment process, and as the research progressed, it created a snowball effect with participants contacting their friends and students. The result being that by the end of the fieldwork there were more people that were interested in participating then there was time to for me to interview.

Hammersley and Atkinson discuss that the drawback to snowball or self-selection recruitment is that it can attract people from similar racial, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds. They also comment, however, that ‘a representative sample is by no means required in ethnographic research’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:106), especially if the sample, ‘target(s) the people who have the knowledge desired and who may be willing to divulge it to the ethnographer’ (ibid: 106). Although organisations representing a multitude of dance genres and participants from a variety of backgrounds were approached, most of the respondents are white, and consistently represent a middle to upper class socio-economic status. Those recommended by other participants were usually friends and classmates – people who were “like” those who were doing the asking. This was also the situation with the acquaintances who I initially approached at the start of the

research. When this issue was realised, a concerted effort was made to attract a more diverse population, but without success[47].

In her study about socialisation amongst non-professional dancers, Nieminen (2006) reported that most of the adult dancers she surveyed came from racially similar backgrounds representing middle to upper class well educated women. Our studies are similar in their eventual scope in that the recruitment process could be construed as a seemingly "random" process, and respondents who self-selected to participate hailed from particular socio-economic, educational, and racial backgrounds (see also Lawson 2009, Bosse 2015). Sociologist Helen Thomas (1997) also encountered similar issues in her research into dance opportunities in South East London for people over sixty. The racial and socio-economic divisions were partially attributed to the lack in diversity of one of the fieldwork locations, but she also found that the classes in the two other boroughs containing a statistically mixed population, were also not reflected in the participants attending. Whether this is indicative of a stereotype of those who participate in dance activities as an adult is unknown, and needs to be surveyed as a part of a much larger study.

However, despite the lack of diversity, focusing on one sector of the population provides an opportunity for enquiry that might not otherwise have

[47] Throughout the research process, with the intention of forming a diverse participant group, dance organisations who cater to individuals from a range of socio-economic, social, and cultural backgrounds were approached. As no particular dance form was the focus of the research, it was the intention that a wide range of dance and dancers be represented. As such, careful attention was paid to providing recruitment materials to a large sample of dance communities. When respondents were slow in coming, I began with those who initially expressed an interest and self-selected to be a part of the research. I did, however, continue to try and create a more varied group by again approaching dance teachers and organisations where a more diverse group of dancers might be associated. Although I received a favourable response, and several dancers communicated with me and expressed an interest in participating, none committed to a formal interview. Future research includes an interest in investigating this further in order to address both the differences and commonalities of this phenomenon from a perspective that includes a larger and more global and socially inclusive and representative population.

been possible. For example, most of the participants in this research had the try financial means to engage with dance on a regular basis, which made the possibilities for following through with their active interest much easier. Several spoke unprompted about the monetary commitment that their dance lives required. For some this was simply the cost of classes and dance wear, but for others it meant traveling to competitions, or, like Guang and Deklen, the reconstruction of portions of their homes into spaces where they could practice, teach, and hold dance events. There are a few who, after making substantial financial investments in their dance studies, needed to find less costly options for continued participation. These included such tasks as teaching beginner level classes, volunteering at dance events, or serving as a receptionist at the dance studio. For example, Motoko works during the week as a journalist, but volunteers several evenings and weekends at her local studio to offset the cost of her twelve classes per week. She also runs a website about hip hop events in exchange for entrance fees. At one time, Celine was living and working in a rural location and had to drive several hours to, as she puts it, '*get my dance fix'*. As she had to invest quite a bit of money in transportation, she used her church contacts to find people with whom she could stay the night. Interestingly, she mentioned that she never actually met any of the people who offered accommodation as she arrived to their homes late at night after dancing, and had to leave quite early in the morning to get back to her home to play the piano for services at her church. What these examples indicate, is that although some of the participants may

have had smaller financial resources, they had the wherewithal and commitment to find creative solutions[48] in order to continue to dance.

In 2008 the UK Arts Council investigated the issue of income and dance participation when they reported, 'The higher one's social status, the more likely one is to attend ballet and contemporary dance events, as well as to participate in "other dance"[49] activities' (UK Arts Council 2008:206). The report continues:

> Furthermore, the multivariate analysis used in the Taking Part research tells us that there are many persisting socio-demographic inequalities in the levels of engagement with dance. This is particularly true in the case of attendance at contemporary dance and ballet. Attendance at these events is low and the attending minority are typically white, well-educated Londoners of high social status; and in the case of ballet also on a high income. Conversely, those who display numerous markers of social disadvantage are significantly less likely to attend: those with a low educational level, low status, minority ethnic background, low income and poor health.
>
> (UK Arts Council 2008:208)

Hanna (2006) speaks about the large expenditure required for amateur dancers when she writes about the thousands of dollars that are often invested by adults who participate in ballroom dance lessons. This topic is reiterated by dance scholar Juliet McMains (2007) who in her early amateur study of ballroom dance, paid almost three times the cost of her yearly rent for lessons. These financially related aspects raise questions about the factors

[48] Although not implicitly evident here, there have been studies showing that individuals with higher levels of education and socio-economic status possess greater skills related to creative problem solving. This is due in part to decreased levels of stress, increased levels of confidence and feelings of empowerment, as well as academic and cognitive competence. (See Bloom 1956, Bradley and Corwyn 2002).

[49] The report also mentions adult dance participation in voluntary groups or folk dance, but does not make mention of the costs or level of education associated with the members of such groups. It does however, indicate that there are increasing opportunities for participation in dance for people of all backgrounds through council funded dance groups, local festivals and free public performances, but that the people attending such events are still not fully representative of the varieties of populations in the UK. http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/dance-mapping (Accessed 24 April, 2015)

related to dance participation in general. Research participant Guang spoke at length about the potential business opportunity of marketing dance to adults. He says,

Guang 45: USA

I feel like a lot of adults could benefit in a huge way from it…I believe the dance industry is sleeping on that community. They have no idea how to access that community because they spend so much time trying to reach just young ones. When they think of young people they think - the only time they think of people my age is they think 'how do I get to this guy's kids?'

But with dance schools closing left and right, having a hard time staying open, you would think they would actually take an interest in, 'hey this person already makes money, they spend money all the time on all sorts of things that are just frivolous'. If we could just get some of them to come in maybe we won't have such a hard time staying open all the time…they just do not know that there is this market here that can be developed. I agree with the notion that it's not a market that's just sitting there waiting to be reached - you do have to build it.

What Guang points out is the existence of a group of people who are looking for community, activity, and with more disposable income that those who are younger, which he sees as a prime market for dance participation. However, it does raise the question, are certain people attracted to dancing because it is an acceptable and viable activity to which they are financially able to commit? In terms of this research, the answer seems to be yes, given the population of respondents, and the types of dance genres included. Only those participants in this research who take part in the ballet based Dance for Parkinson's classes and the inclusive dance group have less of a financial commitment than those who are taking more "formal" or codified dance classes, but even so, there are other financial necessities related to transport, clothing, etc. Taking several dance classes every week, as well as investing in the paraphernalia (shoes, clothing, etc.), and the costs associated with transit, no

matter one's ethnicity, age or experience, involves a financial commitment. Alongside this, the possibility that certain genres such as ballroom or competition dancing might be more open to those who are able to finance their participation also needs to be acknowledged. Referring back to Hanna's assertion that 'to dance is human', allows for the recognition that we all have the ability to move in a dance-like fashion. But to be able to afford formal dance training is another matter altogether.

2.6 Interviews

The interviews, as noted earlier, took place either face to face, or via Skype. The qualitative interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately an hour to an hour and a half, allowing ample time and space for open ended responses. The majority were loosely structured around a series of specific questions (see appendix C),[50] further information seeking queries based on their responses, and spontaneous pieces of information or topics that the participants chose to include. When reviewing the early interviews, I noticed that the questions were being asked in a specific order and fashion that tended to control the interview, leading towards a particular outcome. My voice was also too present at times, and tended to overlap with the participant's comments. Therefore, I realised that it was better to adopt a sense of 'naturalism' in the interview process, which aims for a 'minimum of disruption by the researcher' (Harvey and MacDonald 1993:176). This was especially important when the conversation shifted to include intimate or emotional memories, which were often a prominent element within the discussions. By allowing for, and giving the participant time to relax and settle

within the interview, it established a greater sense of trust and respect, resulting in what seemed to be more open and confident responses.

As stated earlier in the chapter, the majority of the participants self-selected to participate in this research by responding to either a call for participants from flyers, Facebook forum postings, emails, or word of mouth. The latter became the most interesting and seemed to accommodate the somewhat synchronistic nature, as expressed by many of the participants, about their introductions and unexpected encounters with dance. Participants were also found at vintage clothing sales, the local laundrette, and at parties through casual conversations about the nature of my topic. At times there appeared to be almost a form of spontaneous recruitment where the respondent was the person who had had such an experience and responded, 'You need to interview me!', and at other times it was a referral to a friend.

Once contacted, and it was determined that the interested individual would be an appropriate match for the research[51], arrangements for a meeting were made. The interviews were both audio and video recorded. Originally the emphasis was placed on the video recording, as the research was focused on dance and physical movement practice and participants often chose to move to illustrate what they meant. As the project progressed, each type of recording served its own purpose and were utilised differently. When watching the video, I paid more attention to the ways in which they used their body, both gesturally while speaking as well as related to the demonstration of performance related movements. Consequently, the use of video was

[51]This was determined through a short conversation where the potential participant was asked to describe why they responded to my request to be interviewed. In only two cases were participants not deemed appropriate for the study, and this was for reasons of age (under 18), and a high level of professional dance training from an early age.

invaluable in its documentation of the 'parallel' language (McFee 2003: 113) of dance and the body. Mid-way through the process I began listening to the interviews while walking or travelling, discovering pieces of the story that had been overlooked when only watching the video. In this way, what had been originally considered as the "secondary" recording, provided its own unique contributions that might have been disregarded if only one mode of documentation had been used. In the final analysis for this project, more attention was paid to the verbal rather than the physical expressions. But as a researcher of dance stories I consider the use of video to be imperative to capture the nuances expressed both in words and movement, and will develop this further in future research.

2.6.1 Interview Structure

The interviews included a combination of structured and semi-structured questions designed to elicit responses from the participants about their experiences with dance, both past and present. Differing from a specifically ethnographic or oral history style of interview, the questions in this research lean more towards what ethnomethodologist Kathryn Roulston classifies as a 'constructionist interview' (Roulston 2010:60) where the interaction is co-constructed with the goal of examining a 'particular version of affairs, produced by particular interlocutors on specific occasions' (ibid:60). From the transcript, the researcher then works to construct or design a pattern of data that can be examined either structurally or topically to meet the needs of the study (ibid: 60). Although a specific body of questions was created, they existed as more of an interview guide (Merriam 2009: 109), or guiding template (see appendix C). In every interview, however, the first and last

questions remained relatively the same, with nine further questions interspersed throughout in order to gather information on specific topics of interest to the research. This allowed for a level of flexibility to address the differing issues and topics that arose within each interview. The first question asked for information about their life outside of dance (occupation, family members, etc.). This was done to determine what other people or activities occupy their time, as well as provide an opportunity for me to observe their body language in what could be considered a form of neutral conversation. It also allowed the participant an opportunity to begin the interview from a place that could be perceived as easy and non-threatening. Each of the other questions were interspersed throughout, their placement often reliant upon verbal clues or indicators from the interview. This created a more relaxed and fluid atmosphere in which both the participant and their stories were placed at the centre. However, at times there were definitive points of thematic interest that if not answered within the conversation, were asked directly to garner the information needed. On the whole, all who expressed an interest or agreed to participate were more than willing to share their experience. In only one instance did someone refuse to be interviewed because of the use of a video camera, and in a later conversation, it was revealed that it was related to revealing memories which would take him through some painful areas in his life. As discussed, emotional responses were quite normal as a part of this line of questioning, and although what was expressed was different for each person, I soon expected that there might be time and space needed for these types of sensitive reactions.

Categorically and thematically, the areas of enquiry were created keeping in mind what qualitative researcher Michael Quinn Patton suggests are questions to encourage feedback from participants. They are divided into the following areas, 1) experience and behaviour, 2) opinion and values, 3) feeling, 4) knowledge, 5) sensory, and 6) background/demographic (Quinn Patton 2002, Merriam 2009: 96). The inclusion of such questions, especially in a qualitative research interview, allows for responses that provide more than surface information, encouraging the respondent to create a dialogue that goes beyond the basic question and answers, moving instead into areas more reflective and meaningful. Although not implicit as some questions utilised several categories, they contributed to the interview guide creation and anticipated hypothetical responses.

Of the thirty-eight interviews, the first five are categorised as the preliminary protocol in that they allowed for the practice and eventual establishment of the primary questions used throughout the rest of the interviews. Each of the first five participants was contacted and asked the questions that were missing from their original conversation. Of the five, only three responded and filled in the gaps. Therefore, the data that will receive the most focus will be 1) the answers to the primary questions and 2) the dominant themes as they represent and relate to the majority of the participants.

2.7 The Place of Reflexivity

Engaging with interviews and narrative research is a process that is co-constructed between the researcher and the participant where both voices play an important role within the investigative and analytical process (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern supports this premise

when she speaks about 'auto-anthropology' as being a form of research at home that allows the investigator to become the 'author in relation to those being studied' (Strathern 1987:26), a role in which his/her voice and interpretation of the data is intertwined with those of the informants. She addresses this by examining the concepts of residing both outside and inside the research in that it renders back 'to the culture or society from which it comes, the culture's central constructs, such as "relationship" or "role" …' as well as 'self-knowledge both for those under the study…' (ibid: 27). As such, a reflexive stance can therefore be an important factor in the interpretation of the data, as long as the researcher maintains an awareness of their own cultural bias and background. Anthropologist Phyllis Gorfain maintains that,

> …reflexivity does not address what we know, but how we think we know…In reflexive examination we probe the techniques by which we reflect ourselves to our ourselves…Such duplicity examines not only the objects in which we become objectified to ourselves but also the methods by which we see ourselves making ourselves in them.
>
> (Gorfain 1986:209)

The addressing of this 'double facing mirror'[52] (ibid:209) approach to an investigation helps the researcher both acknowledge and form an interpretation of the group being studied, while mediating and upholding their own personal experience. It encourages a process of questioning that reflects the experience, preferences, attitudes and points of view of both parties, while maintaining a topical through-line related to the overall data collection. Such inclusion of reflexive moments emerges firstly within this research in the form

[52] Similar in concept to W.E.B Dubois's concept of double consciousness which "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (1903: 8)

of points of discussion within the semi-structured interviews, and secondly within the presentation of the data. A seminal point of interest when choosing this topic was to investigate the dance experiences of people that were, for the most part, in direct opposition from my own. Mentioned at the start of Chapter one, I began dance classes at a young age and continued through my university studies. Most of the participants started dancing as adults, and trained outside of a professional context. Therefore, throughout the process there was both a constant internal and external comparison that both inspired, and served to fuel the overall rationale. It was almost impossible not to occupy the 'double facing mirror' spoken of above, especially when the participants were given the opportunity to ask their own questions of me. '*Why did you choose this project?*' and '*What is your dance?*' were the two most often asked questions, requiring me to speak about my experiences with dance, as well as the reasons behind the topic of the research. Although occurring mostly at the end of our time together, it often inspired new subjects and areas of discussion that were technically outside of the formal interview. The opening of the door into my world seemed in some way to deepen the trust with the participant and at times, led to moments of "truth-telling" that included more in-depth details left out of the original interview. For example, towards the end of Darren's interview he revised his earlier statements when he said, 'Well, let me tell you the actually story of what happened'. He then went on to expand upon many aspects, including an addiction to recreational drugs that he claims he gave up as a result of participating in wheelchair dance. Throughout Dean's interview he continually stated, *'That's triggered another*

memory…' As such his story took on a spiral like quality, starting slowly at the beginning, and opening and expanding as he moved forward.

Initially, I regarded this final portion of the interview with caution as I felt it was inappropriate to give away too much information about myself. However, although I did use discretion with what information I shared, I did reveal more details about myself when it was realised that it might elicit both a deeper level of trust as well as further pieces of information. It seemed that my knowledge of dance and dancing was often seen as an asset, and in several interviews, it became an avenue towards commonality. This was further solidified when the participants mentioned that we were members of the same *'community'* or *'family'* as dancers. Wulff speaks about a common connection or shared experience in her study of ballet dancers, when she experienced similar reactions from the dancers she interviewed. She says, 'my dancing past made them trust me and accept me as a part of their setting' (Wulff 2014: 167). She also mentions that there was a greater level of trust from the dancers in regards to representation, 'My dancing experience would ensure that I represented them in a fair way…' (Wulff 2008: 81), and this impression of a shared understanding between participant and interviewer, imagined or otherwise, can often help to open doors and quickly deepen the relationship. I also found that a sense of connection continued in follow up conversations, most of which were requested by the participants. Not only did they ask about how the research was progressing, it also included wanting to know if I had finally found my dance. One follow up interview progressed very quickly into this line of questioning, with the participant's parting words including, '*The next time we speak I want to hear you talking about your dancing, instead of*

me talking about mine'. Interestingly, the impression of a shared activity or community often turned the interviewer into the interviewee.

In only one interview did I feel that my background as a dancer changed the nature of the interaction. Although many of the participants had quite strong opinions about their selected dance form and how it should or should not be performed, Sharon took this sentiment to another extreme. Her statements about dance and her perceptions about dancers were often very derogatory and were made with a tone that indicated that I, as a trained dancer, might be in agreement with her. This also carried over into the session in which I danced with her, at a mixed level sacred circle dance class, and led to comments that belied a feeling on her part of "us and them". This behaviour led to some uncomfortable moments and dissuaded several members in the class from participating in the research because they felt that they had not danced enough to qualify. Other reactions to my reflexive sharing often included an explanation of the reasons why they decided to respond to the call for participants. There was a connection found in hearing the reasons behind my research interest combined with the rationale that seemed to prompt such feedback.

Dean 60: UK

It caught my interest because when you raised the issues of why you were doing this study, it sort of triggered some of the events that happened to me. So that's why I responded.

Other statements were indicators of the enjoyment they found within the discussion, expressions of thanks at being asked to talk about their dance

lives, as well as a willingness to share their experience with others in the hopes that they could help find additional people for me to interview.

Laina, 40: USA

I plan to post on Facebook my experience of doing this interview because…it's so fun to have somebody be interested in me talking about dancing. I think it's great!

Rebecca, 30: UK

The other thing that I wanted to say was thank you for the opportunity to talk about the story… It really made me reflect on a lot of the commonalities, all of the communities and stuff…It really made me reflect on how powerful all the stuff is actually.

It was the expressions of thanks that most caught my attention as there was a genuine sense of gratitude that seemed to accompany their statements. This for me, was very unexpected as I felt that I should be the one thanking them for their time and willingness to participate. Consequently, these statements deepened my understanding and appreciation of the value and meaning placed upon their dance experiences.

2.8 Processes of Data Consolidation and Evaluation

Investigating and evaluating the narrated dance experiences of individuals from a variety of ages and backgrounds presents a unique set of methodological challenges. Not only is every story singular to the individuals telling it, their understanding of, participation in, and connection to their experiences and chosen dance forms is also exclusive to themselves. Keeping all of this in mind, it became very apparent that the integrity of each of the stories must be preserved, while still allowing for a critical assessment. Therefore, I began by identifying general patterns, themes, and behaviours,

and as will be seen in the interlude between the first and second sections of the thesis, created my own evaluative tool that allowed for a more comprehensive analysis. The investigation utilized approaches from both ethnography and oral history, which supported my inclination towards finding analytical methods to support a holistic and humanistic context of data collection. The interviews, as co-created experiences, were conducted specifically for the purposes of this research, and fell within the boundaries for a humanistic model as purported by ethnographer John D. Brewer,

> …to ask people for their views, meanings and constructions; to ask people in such a way that they can tell them in their own words; to ask them in depth because these meanings are often complex, taken for granted and problematic; to address the social context which gives meaning and substance to their views and constructions.
>
> (Brewer 2000:35)

Therefore, a constructivist perspective was always at the forefront, keeping with the understanding that it is through our constructed and accumulated micro experiences that we develop macro or larger personal worldviews. With respect to the individual nature of each of the stories, the starting point of the dissemination of the data should be one of a thematic nature. In this way, the focus is not placed on any one individual, but rather how they reflect the common experiences of the group.

2.9 A Thematic Process of Evaluation

The data from the interviews provided a very large amount of material that needed to be categorised and analysed. The initial form used for building a structure for analysis was through identifying and grouping topics by theme. Through the establishment of a thematic set of frames, data could be

arranged in such a manner where, ‘content is the exclusive focus’ (Riessman 2007: 53). In this way, the commonalities expressed amongst the stories of the participants could be identified and separated into categories to be analysed.

Thematic analysis is defined by psychologists Virginia Braun and Virginia Clarke as, 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke 2006:77), that 'involves the searching *across* a data set...to find repeated patterns of meaning (ibid: 88). Considered as 'a foundational method for qualitative analysis' (ibid: 77) it is an appropriate tool when using multiple forms of materials (video, audio, field research) that have been collected through a variety of methods. It is flexible in its allowance for what and how the data collected will be collated and analysed. In this way, a thematic approach is useful to this research in that it supports not only the procedure taken in the gathering of the data, but in the analysis of the data itself. A thematic form of analysis is without a specific theoretical connection and thus, serves to shape and narrow the data by helping the researcher freely determine which selections are most relevant based on the central questions and goals, through the patterns or themes that emerge.

Braun and Clarke identify a theme as 'something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning...' (ibid: 83). The way in which a theme is articulated is determined by both the researcher and the consistent needs of the research. What is important is to identify and group the themes and patterns in such a way that it provides a 'rich description' (ibid: 84) for the researcher as well as

the reader. This is similar to what anthropologist Clifford Geertz refers to as a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973: 3) in that the in-depth investigation of themes and patterns, as expressed by individual informants, brings forward and reveals the layers of social and cultural patterns. These patterns are then available for further investigation and commentary by the researcher. Within this study, the individual interviews had to be broken down in to themes based upon a variety of sectors and patterns. Keeping in mind the desire for a rich or thick description, of greatest interest were those areas related to the research questions such as dance and personal experience, alteration of identity and worldview, etc. These overarching themes were further distilled to reveal more specific details.

A thematic method concurs with the original inclination towards creating a synergetic and holistic study based upon the notion that through the examination of thematic topics, a greater understanding of the larger whole will emerge. Although this process, when applied to the interviews, was very time consuming, it resulted in a much more thorough investigation, and revealed many minute details that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. By creating a series of diagrams (see below and in the interlude between Chapters three and four), not only were each of the major themes and patterns broken into smaller and workable units, I was better able to cross code and find similarities within the data. In addition, the creation of figures and charts to represent the themes and patterns created a synergetic understanding of each individual and dance event, and links back to Fuller Snyder in her article *Levels of Event Patterns* (1989) where she remarks '…as one begins to perceive the dynamics of a structure, a system reveals itself

which communicates more than the structure' (Fuller Snyder 1989: 3). This therefore, continues to support the holistic and constructivist premise of the importance of investigating each of the smaller related and unrelated units of meaning to formulate a more detailed picture. By separating, processing, and considering the data from multiple points of view, it 'goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations...that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (Braun and Clark 2006: 86, see also Burr 2003, Boyatzis 1998).

As the questions in this research seek to understand not only the "why" of how a person's life was impacted through their participation with dance, but also the "how, what, and who" that served to help construct the event or experience, a perspective that goes beyond a general description and delves into the deeper social and structural constructs was needed. Therefore, the thematic coding was driven by a combination of both data and theory. The latter came first in response to the already existing research questions, and the former emerged as the data were examined and divided into sets and sub-sets. This process of consolidating the data was one where firstly, the answers to the questions from the interviews was collated and considered. Secondly, the dominate themes were identified, and thirdly, similarities in language were determined. From this process a chart was created (see appendix G) that collated the information from the participant's responses to the questions. As such, the patterns and themes began to emerge, and the larger frameworks developed to further support the research questions, aims and objectives. This type of process continued, working alternately between

the macro and the micro, and vice versa, with the data eventually grouped to fit under larger thematic umbrellas. The first of these is presented below, with further elaboration offered in the interlude, and discussed in Chapters four, five, and six.

2.10 The 'general and the particular': Narrative and Thematic Analysis

Sociologist Susan E. Chase says that when examining stories, to gain as full a picture as possible, one must be able to understand and analyse the patterns that she describes as the 'general and the particular' (Chase 1995:22). This research is no exception and the issues that rose to the surface over the course of the data collection speak to topics that range from overarching to minute. As an introduction to the participants, firstly will be a representation of the general similarities and broader patterns, followed by a brief introduction of some of the themes that emerged during the data analysis. In this way, the 'general and the particular' could begin to be identified in order to extract the details relevant to the needs of the research.

As mentioned above, the narratives were organised and separated into several types of thematic groupings. Firstly, into conceptual models based on circumstantial similarities such as common themes and patterns, which when examined, could be divided and grouped into a variety of thematic diagrams. The following chart represents some of the initial groupings of the data, and are categorically divided as follows: A) Childhood/Adolescent participation in dance, B) Encounter with dance as an adult, and C) Primary reason for continuing to dance as an adult, D) Consequences related to the impact professional life, E) Consequences related to personal or social life, and F) Extra-ordinary encounter or disorienting dilemma. These classifications

represent the some of the general topics through which the participants and their narratives were initially arranged and are presented here as an introduction to the development of the thematic structures, and will be explored further in the interlude between Chapters three and four.

A – Childhood/Adolescent participation in dance

A.1 – Claim of no participation in dance.

A.2 – Recreational participation in dance.

A.3 – Longed to participate in dance.

A.4 – Some structured dance classes.

B - Encounter with dance as an adult

B.1 – Unexpected encounter (visual, physical, social).

B.2 – Encountered at the influence or suggestion of another person.

B.3 – Personal and uninfluenced choice.

B.4 – Extra-ordinary encounter.

C – Primary reason for continuing to dance as an adult

C.1 – Teacher or other influential person.

C.2 – Community engagement

C.3 – Emotional engagement

C.4 – Physical engagement

D. Consequences related to the impact on professional life

D.1 – Change of profession to a career that includes dance

D.2 – Equal division of importance given to dance life and work life

D.3 – Completion of a degree programme in dance

E. Consequences related to personal or social life

E.1 – Partial or complete change of social circle

E.2 – Partial or complete change of identity

E.3 – Met spouse or partner through dancing

F. Extra-ordinary encounter or Disorienting Dilemma

F.1 – At the start of dance participation (Unexpected, Aha! Moment)

F.2 – After participating in dance for some time (Unexpected, Aha!)

F.3 – After dancing for some time (Slow realisation)

F.4 – No experience that was out of the ordinary

2.10.1 Participant Summaries

Presented below are a few brief biographical summaries which include representations of the above categories. For efficiency and introductory purposes, my voice is used as 'ethnographer-author' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 199), with limited quotes interspersed. The intention here is to firstly provide a snapshot of the variety of ages, professions, experiences and styles of dance, and secondly, to show how the above chart was applied to each participant. Although rudimentary, what is represented is intended to serve as an introduction to both the participants and the themes found in their stories, all of which are expanded upon in the second half of the thesis. The information contributed by all thirty-eight participants are included and contribute in a variety of ways throughout the thesis, there is not the space here to present summaries of each of their stories. (A full listing can be found in appendix E).

Following on from these short biographies is a presentation of sociologist Robert Stebbins' theory of serious and casual leisure. Although not a primary theoretical frame, it was found to be a useful lens through which to illuminate the ways in which the participants describe their current engagement and participation with dance and dancing.

2.10.2 Selected Participant Biographies

Ralph is twenty-five years old and lives in New York City, USA. At the time of the interview he was living in London where he was completing a postgraduate degree in dance. As a young child, he was enrolled for one year in ballet classes and appeared in a local production of the Nutcracker. Although he enjoyed the classes and performances, he became aware of the disapproval from the male members of his family and quit ballet, participating in soccer and other team sports instead. While at university he was introduced to ballroom dancing by a friend and realised that he was able to pick up the dance material quickly. The next few years were a combination of ballroom dance competitions and university studies, something that changed when he decided to do a semester abroad in Spain. Shortly after arriving, he learned of the death of his first high school boyfriend whose passing was extremely difficult. One evening Ralph found himself in a small Spanish bar where flamenco music and dance was being performed and he instantly connected to it and came back night after night. A few months later he returned for his last year of university, and immediately sought out a flamenco teacher. Quickly reaching a high level of proficiency, he applied and won an award to study the form in Spain where he stayed for two years immersing himself and honing his skills. He later took up post graduate study in dance, focusing on flamenco and gender studies. (A.4, B.1, C.1 – C.4, D.2. D.3, E.1, F.2)

Daniel is thirty years old and lives in London, UK, where he is currently employed as the manager of a large dance retail store. The child of Sri Lankan parents, he was raised in a strict household where a Christian faith base was interwoven throughout all parts of their lives. As a young man

Daniel had some dance training, which was mostly utilised for worship during Sunday services at his church. From a young age, he knew instinctively that he was gay, and as a teenager he remembers seeing the Madonna video of her song *Vogue* (1990), and became obsessed with the thought that this might be a world where he could belong and be accepted. He began sneaking out to street dance clubs and caught the eye of some dancers who took him under their wing, eventually being "adopted" into a Vogue "house" or family. Daniel claims that it was through dance, especially the form known as Vogue Fem, that he could both accept his sexuality and the knowledge that he was transgender. He said, *If I didn't start Vogue-ing, I wouldn't have become aware…it took me deeper into looking at myself as an individual in regards to my sexuality, my personality, my character, my feelings…I understood the whole of me who had been feeling different, thinking different…things just started clicking.* In addition to his employment in the dancewear industry, Daniel also teaches Vogue-ing classes, has established his own "house", and runs monthly Vogue and Vogue Fem dance events. (A.4, B.1, C.1-C.4, D.1, E.1 &2, F.1)

Abram is sixty-three years old and lives on the South coast of England. An astro-physicist by profession, he discovered Morris dancing during the second year of his PhD studies. Invited by a friend, he went out of curiosity and attended regularly for the remainder of his studies, occasionally '*dancing out*' with the group, and slowly becoming more proficient. That he became involved in dance was a bit of a shock as he never danced when he was young growing up, claiming that '*I lived my life in my head'*, but somehow it stuck and he continues to be involved with Morris dance to this day. Early in

his experience he met his current wife, a Morris and Step dancer, and eventually they started a local performing company that included both styles of dance. Although this company has now closed, they are both still involved in various remnants that includes teaching and presenting in schools. Identity was an interesting aspect of Abram's story in that he mentioned that he goes by different names in his professional and dance circles. He knows when he picks up the phone who is calling and for what purpose by the name they use to address him. In this way, each of his worlds, which for him both contain a certain amount of intensity, remain separate, but equal. (A.1, B.3, C.2 & 4, D.2, E.1-3, F.2)

Deklen is forty years old. Italian by birth, he moved to Germany six years ago both for his profession as a medical physicist, but also to follow a love affair. Shortly after he arrived his relationship ended and he found himself in a new country, with a large empty apartment, but no friends or family. One evening after a party, he and some colleagues accidentally found themselves in a local tango club. Also an amateur photographer, he decided to stay and take pictures of some of the dancers. This continued for many months and he slowly became known in the tango community – but never as a dancer. A chance meeting brought an offer of lessons and slowly he began to learn to dance, a first in his life. As a means of improving quickly, he took a trip to Buenos Aires where he met a tango teacher who changed his entire way of thinking and dancing. A second chance occurrence brought this teacher to Germany where Deklen opened his home for him to teach private and small group lessons. This led to other evenings, which became so popular that he eventually re-modelled his apartment - removing several walls, to create more

space for dancing. He now regularly hosts tango events, which, because of the historic parquet floors in his house, were originally known as *"Tango in Socks".* (A.1, B.1, C.1-4, D.1, E.1, F.2)

Motoko is a forty-year old journalist and lives in Washington DC. Originally from Japan where during her youth '*dance was non-existent. It just wasn't done'*, she came to the United States to attend graduate school in New York City, eventually moving to Washington in 2011. New to the city, she met up with some friends of friends who were members of a homosexual cheerleading squad who used hip-hop dancing in their routine. Instantly intrigued by the dance she sought out a local popular dance studio and enrolled in a beginner class. Her involvement quickly increased to several classes a week, which, because of the expense, caused her to volunteer at the studio in exchange for lessons. After a few years, she auditioned for an adult hip-hop dance company where, originally accepted as an apprentice, she worked '*harder than I ever have in my life'* to become a full member. Through her performances and competitions with this group, she was exposed to the many hip-hop events in the DC area, which she began to videotape and post on YouTube. Her videos became so popular that she eventually started her own web-site showcasing the local hip-hop scene. This site, as well as attending as many dance performances as she can afford, is what she considers as her way of '*giving back'* to the dance community that she feels has given her so much. (A.1, B.2, C.2 &4, D.2, E.1, F.1)

Laina is a forty-year-old professional classical pianist who currently lives in Maryland, USA. In an attempt to save a failing relationship while in graduate school, she registered for a series of ten ballroom dance classes. Her partner

came to one, and she returned for the final nine. Soon this became her passion and she found herself dancing several times a week and entering small competitions. A relocation to Maryland saw a switch from ballroom to West Coast Swing, as she says, '*the style that stuck'*. An engagement and eventual marriage to a man that was jealous of her dancing partners caused her to stop for several years, but she returned immediately after they divorced. When not touring with an orchestra, Laina continues to dance several times a week, including travelling several hours each way to attend dance events. She also competes twelve to fifteen times a year across the United States with both an amateur and pro-am[53] partner. For each of these routines she has paid for the choreography and says '*Participating in this type of dance is a very expensive hobby!*' Although a large part of her life, it was only recently that she revealed her dance life to her colleagues for fear that they might think that her chosen form of dance was '*beneath that of a serious classical musician'*. But her love of dancing helped her overcome her fears and she now includes it as the final line of her professional biography. (A.4, B.3, C.2 – 4, D.2, E.1, E.3, F.1)

Dean is sixty years old and, although he claims to have little to no dance experience as a child, he lived next door to a dance teacher who told him on a regular basis that '*there was a dancer inside of him*!' He went on to become a pilot in the Royal Air Force and later a financial trader, forgetting the prophetic words of his former neighbour. Looking for an activity that they could do together, he and his wife joined a ballroom dance class that they say '*was the*

[53] Referring to a dance partnership where one is a professional and the other an amateur. They are usually a part of competitive ballroom dance styles (see McMains 2007, Bosse 2015).

most miserable experience of our lives', and blaming the inexperienced teaching and terrible music, they vowed never to try dancing again. But a few years later after watching the popular UK television programme, *Strictly Come Dancing* (2004 – Present), they tried again at a new studio and had a wonderful time. Dean, who was the first-aid/emergency responder for his company, remembers going to a training session where he spoke about how many people he worked with were falling seriously ill with heart attacks or strokes. Around this same time, he also realised how unhappy he was, the only thing bringing him joy being the increasing number of dance classes he was attending each week. Consequently, he decided to take early retirement and opened a ballroom dancing school for adults. He also went to an open audition and became a dancer in the opening ceremony for the 2012 London Olympic Games. This led to becoming a member of POD – the Post Olympic Dancers, with whom he takes classes and performs regularly around the UK. (A.1, B.3, C.1-C.4, D.1, E.1, F.3)

Calvin is seventy-nine years old, and a former military officer and catholic priest. Raised in Scotland, the only dancing he did as a child was when he was asked to portray David dancing before the Lord in a school pageant. As a teenager, he attended a military academy where learning ballroom and traditional Scottish dancing were requirements for officer training. During this time, he attended a performance of a major ballet company and was so moved that he wrote a letter asking if he could transfer and study to be a dancer. They replied that he was too old to begin ballet training, and so he went on with his military career serving in Europe and the Middle East. Upon retiring from active duty, he followed his other calling and entered the

priesthood. For his seventieth birthday, he decided that he would like to try something new and intended to enrol in a Spanish language course, but it was full and the only openings were in a contemporary dance class. He joined and found that he picked up movement quickly, and within a few months he was discovered by several choreographers who were creating intergenerational pieces. Two years later he enrolled in a contemporary dance certificate course, and continued to perform, eventually earning his Equity card. At the time of the interview he was dancing four to five days a week with three different companies, and was preparing to travel to Germany for a series of shows. Looking back at the letter he wrote to the ballet school, he says that he is glad that they turned him away, '*because if they hadn't I probably would have stopped dancing at forty, and as a result I am still dancing at almost eighty*!' (A.2, B.1 & 3, C.1 – 4, D.1 & 3, E.1, F.1)

Cathy is forty years old and originally from Spain, currently resides in London, UK. Involved in athletics and music when she was growing up, she had no interest and little exposure to dance. While in her early twenties, she and a friend went to see a ballet performance, and entranced by the experience, she described it as being one of the most influential moments of her life. She continued with her university studies, but went to see as many ballet performances as she her limited time and money allowed. Although ballet as a genre was her passion, she was never interested in any form of training, choosing instead to participate in folk dance. In her mid-thirties Cathy decided to move to London for a year where she worked as a dance reviewer for a prestigious dance and theatre award. This experience exposed her to dance performances and companies of all types, but ballet remains her primary

passion, inspiring her to pursue it theoretically in post-graduate studies. (A.1, B.1 & B.4, C.3 & C.4, D.1 & D.3, E.1, F.1)

2.11 Serious and Casual Leisure

A commonality amongst the participants is the spending of large amounts of time engaging in dance activities. Although varied, it seemed to go beyond an occasional or leisure based activity done for fun outside of one's employment or paid profession, where a time and personal commitment is minimal. Leisure is defined as an,

> …un-coerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, using their ability and resources, actually do in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (or both).
>
> (Stebbins 2014: 188)

A key discovery therefore, was that the participant's association with, and commitment to, dance and dance culture, went far beyond that of a part-time extracurricular activity. Many described their involvement in boundaried terms, differentiating and classifying their different types of "lives" by stating, '*I have my work life and my dance life'* - meaning that these were the two areas which occupied the greatest amounts of their time. For some, these lives remained separate, but for others, what began as an incidental undertaking, eventually expanded into a much greater endeavour.

Sociologist Robert Stebbins has spent much of his professional life researching leisure activities and classifies them into three types - serious, casual, and project-based. The first two aptly describe the type of involvement with dance discussed by the participants, and so will be applied in order to provide further insight and introductions to the participants and their differing levels of commitment to dance. It should be noted that although this framework has been utilised to analyse athletic, artistic, and other general forms of leisure, rarely has it been applied to dance.[54]

2.11.1 Types of Leisure: Serious, Casual, and Project-Based

2.11.1.1.1 Serious Leisure

'Serious leisure' is a term coined by Stebbins (1982) to describe the experiences of those whose engagement with an activity is more than just a passing interest. It is the,

> …systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling in nature for the participant to find a career there acquiring and expressing a combination of special skills, knowledge, and experience.
>
> (Stebbins 2007: xii)

Stebbins use of the word 'career' refers to a long-term commitment to a project or activity where the time spent and the skills gained are similar to that of a professional occupation (Stebbins 1992). It is his conception of a career that is the defining difference between serious and casual leisure and, because of the extreme time and personal commitment, acts as an influential

[54] The one article that consistently comes up, and is referenced is Carol Brown's *The Carolina Shaggers: Dance as Serious Leisure* (2007). In her text, as well as a personal correspondence (2016), she also cites difficulties in finding resources, and uses the theory as a way to begin the process of examining and placing social forms of dance into the realm of serious leisure.

motivator towards shaping individual and social identities, knowledge, and worldviews. For example, Jessica works as a full-time librarian, but spends much of her free time involved in dance related activities such as participating in dance classes and socials with her partner, serving as a ballroom dance DJ, rehearsing with her dance team, and teaching a ballroom dance based fitness programme. As she says, '*I've just about got time to go to work!'* Not long after Jessica's discovery of ballroom dance, she came out as a lesbian, and she began to seek out same sex dance opportunities to not only meet potential partners, but also to immerse herself in gay culture. In this way, her dance activities served as the gateway to not only a dance culture, but to a social subculture with its own rules and norms. She is one who, as mentioned above, sees her work world and her dance world as two separate entities, each of which contribute to her life in meaningful, but separate ways. Both are her "careers", but each are separated into very distinct configurations of her overall lifestyle and identity.

2.11.1.1.2 Casual Leisure

Casual leisure is an activity with a lesser dedication of time and resources, but is that which, 'is immediately, intrinsically rewarding…pleasurable core activity, requiring relatively little or no special training to enjoy it' (Stebbins 2006: xii). Casual leisure does not occupy the central place or have a consequential hold within a person's life, and as such is considered by Stebbins to produce feelings of playfulness or relaxation that are greater than those in serious leisure. This is due in part to the lesser commitment of time and energy, as well as a minimal acquisition of a deeply rooted base of skills. It differs from its counterpart in that it lacks the significant time commitment

found with serious leisure pursuits, which often lessens the base of skills and amount of knowledge. It is ‘considerably less substantial and offers no career’ (Stebbins 2007: 38), and is more ‘hedonic’ (Ibid: 2007) in its nature than that of a serious leisure pursuit. In other words, due to the lack of necessary skills, the level of pleasure and enjoyment derived from participating in a casual activity are considered the primary rewards for engagement.

For example, Richard participates once a week in a Dance for Parkinson’s class in central London. Although he attributes much of his social and emotional well-being to his participation with the group, it is only one of many activities with which he is involved and associates himself. The class does offer a skill based set of exercises that are built upon each week, but they are simple enough that a relative beginner could feel comfortable within a few sessions. Richard was very clear in his explanation that the joy he receives from the class was as related to the feeling of being in community with other individuals with Parkinson’s disease, as the movement activity itself. Although he does also attend dance performances, they are on an occasional basis. Therefore, Richard’s participation falls more into the category of casual leisure.

2.11.1.1.3 Project Based Leisure

Project based leisure is the third domain that Stebbins includes in his framework. He describes it as, ‘a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time’ (Stebbins 2007: 43). This type of leisure pursuit is one that occurs when there is a need for an event or special occasion, and thus, requires

special planning. Stebbins cites charity events, birthday gatherings, or festivals as examples of project based leisure pursuits (1992, 2007), and stresses that it is, ‘an uncoerced activity’ (ibid: 44) that still provides tangible rewards. Within my interviews, there were very few examples given of project based-leisure. The types of celebratory or event based examples presented by Stebbins were spoken about (Dance competitions, performances, or workshops) occasionally by the participants, but were directly connected to their serious leisure pursuit, and occurred on a regular basis. There were some who spoke of occasionally trying a class that was different to their primary dance style, but rarely was it continued on a longer-term basis, and would fall more into the category of mixed serious leisure as it was still a dance activity.

2.11.1.1.4 Mixed Serious Leisure

‘Mixed serious leisure’ is the ‘involvement in two or more types or subtypes’ (Stebbins 2007: 34) of a given activity. Stebbins (2001, 2007) speaks about this type of mixed leisure in two ways, relating to those activities that are connected to a central interest, and those that are not. For example, Motoko takes twelve dance classes a week, volunteers as a receptionist at her dance school, rehearses and performs with a hip-hop company for mature dancers, runs a blog promoting hip hop events in her area, attends performances of national and international dance companies, and makes financial donations to dance organisations. When combined, these activities extend the time spent on the original interest, deepening her overall engagement and commitment. For Motoko, none of these activities are for financial gain and she still

considers herself to be an amateur dancer, even though she spends more time on her dance activities than her actual employment as a journalist.

Guang would also fall into the category of one who engages in a form of mixed serious leisure, but includes activities other than those related to dance and dancing. The dance activities however, still tend to take up the largest amount of his time. Also a hip-hop dancer, he takes classes in a local studio, practices in his home studio, and attends battles and events in his area. He and some friends have recently begun to sponsor hip hop events, an activity which developed out of the growing knowledge that as they age, their dance abilities may diminish, but their interest may not. Guang has begun to teach hip-hop classes for adolescents in his home studio, which he sees as a way to continue with the dance form after he is unable to participate in classes and battles. Newly re-married with a step-son at the time of the interview, he was becoming aware that he needed to find activities that would involve his new family. As a result, he returned to his earlier interest in martial arts, as well as spending time skateboarding with his step-son.

Many of the participants are engaged in dance and dancing in such a way that, if placed on a spectrum, would decidedly fall closer to serious rather than casual leisure. Their involvement takes up a major amount of their free time, and they are active, rather than passive, in their participation and motivation. As such, further specifics of serious leisure, as noted by Stebbins, and the ways it describes the participants are detailed below.

2.11.2 Characteristics of Serious Leisure

Serious leisure is classified or identified by Stebbins to have six key characteristics. Although interconnected and somewhat dependent upon each other, they each possess distinct qualities that contribute to the overall development of a serious leisure practitioner. They are:

1) The occasional need to persevere.

2) To have a career in the chosen endeavour.

3) To invest significant personal effort based on special knowledge, training, or skills.

4) To acquire a series of durable benefits

5) To develop and participate in a unique ethos determined by the social world of the activity.

6) The tendency to identify strongly in some way with their chosen pursuit.

(Stebbins 1982: 256, 257, 2007: 6, 7)

2.11.2.1.1 Occasional Need to Persevere

The ‘occasional need to persevere’ is the first and one of the most prominent features distinguishing serious from casual leisure (Stebbins 2007:11). It is the challenge faced by individuals to continue with an activity when faced with adversity or obstacles of some kind. These might include such things as feelings of embarrassment or anxiety, overcoming personal or social stigmas, injury, financial constraints, etc. This notion of perseverance is present in multiple ways within the stories of the participants, occurring at different

stages of their participation. For some, like Matthew and Marco, it was overcoming their fears about dance that stemmed from what they describe as traumatic experiences with dance/dancing when young. For others, like Parker, it was the courage to return to dance classes after their initial introduction, which was often somewhat unpleasant. Parker says,

Parker 58: USA

I made the biggest fool out of myself, one could ever possibly ever imagine, and three weeks later, licking my wounds about the fact that I would never do that again because nobody wants to ever feel that stupid, I realised that there was something there that was interesting.

For those participants whose commitment to dance might be placed at the higher end of a serious leisure spectrum, it would be so because of their willingness to face the challenges associated with the pursuit of dance activities. This was not only connected with entering the dance studio for the first time and engaging with the physical practice, but also the continuation with what many described as situations where they felt uncomfortable, out of place, or embarrassed. The motivation for their perseverance varied, and included such reasons as an internal sensation that compelled them to persist, a feeling of inspiration from the musical accompaniment, and meeting other individuals with whom they had this experience in common. Discussed in more detail in Chapter five, the continuation despite various challenges is also an important step towards the transformation of past belief systems in regards to dance and dancing.

2.11.2.1.2 To Have a Career in the Chosen Endeavour

The second category highlights the creation of a leisure career as it relates to an occupation and dedication to a singular activity. Stebbins considers this process as the most distinguishing factor between the three different types of leisure (Stebbins 2007: 19), in that the chosen enterprise occupies a central role in an individual's life, and the dedication of time and effort is like that which is given to a paid profession. Although financial compensation might be received for their participation from time to time, a leisure career is created in such a way so that the returns are those that are usually other than the receipt of money. A leisure career can exist either within or outside a specific organisation, but it is the commitment and sense of continuity which serve as the most important factors. As might be seen with any form of career, with commitment comes the, 'more or less steady development as a skilled, experienced, and knowledgeable participant… and the deepening fulfilment that accompanies this kind of personal growth' (ibid: 19). Such development includes the passing through of incremental stages within the creation of a career, which reflect 'turning points and stages of achievement or involvement' (Stebbins 2001: 9). These include the acquisition of new knowledge and skills that often results in the expansion of personal abilities and social worlds. Stebbins contends that it is the process of moving through the stages of a leisure career which allows the possibility for unexpected discoveries or chance happenings to occur. Experiences of flow, as discussed in Chapter one, are common occurrences for those who have created leisure careers as they are based upon preparation and competence. Although flow experiences incorporate multiple characteristics of serious leisure, the aspect of copious amounts of time spent developing knowledge and skills helps

provide the foundation for such experiences to take place. These types of flow events also correspond with the first category of perseverance in that it is the remembrance of these happenings that helps to encourage continued participation.

As mentioned above, many of the participants fall into the category of those who maintain that they occupy dual "lives" - work and dance. Each undertaking holds a place of importance and occupies a significant amount of time, but the purposes and rewards are distinct and different. This is further solidified by those who maintain that dance is their passion and brings them the greatest happiness, but would not want to make it their profession for fear that it might then become "work". For them, the dance world is one which lies outside of what they would consider to be their everyday reality, and as such offers the opportunity for fantasy or escape from their day-to-day lives.

For all but three participants who have created a professional dance career, they have dance *related* occupations (dance studio owner, dance teacher, dance store manager), rather than performing as professional dancers. Their physical participation, in regards to dancing for their own personal fulfilment, like those with non-dance affiliated professions, is for the most part, separate from their professional commitments. For example, Dean currently co-owns a ballroom dance studio and his responsibilities centre on the business-related aspects (securing teaching spaces, billing, recruiting new students) while his partner's primary role is as the dance teacher and coach. Although Dean sometimes acts as a dance partner for some of the students, he consciously chooses to keep his leisure career separate from his professional career. In doing so, he continues to enjoy dancing several times per week *'just for the*

fun of it', reaping the emotional and physical benefits that has kept him dancing for many years.

2.11.2.1.3 To Invest Significant Personal Effort Based on Special Knowledge, Training, or Skills.

Significant effort is the third of the characteristics and it refers to 'the exertion of significant personal effort to obtain and develop special knowledge, skills, and abilities' (Page-Gould et. al 2008: 49, Stebbins 2007). Either one or all such characteristics may develop through the process of participation in the chosen activity, but it is the effort made towards the acquisition of the skill set that determines the difference between serious and casual leisure. Significant effort forms the foundation for the eventual development of a leisure career in that it involves a conscious active and temporal commitment to the chosen activity. This element was present amongst the participant group, but varied based on their stage of career development, financial status, geographical location, etc. As with each of the categories, there are differing levels and circumstances that determine the amount of effort exerted towards participating in dance. For example, after his initial introduction, Matthew was in a social and financial position to enrol in every class offered in the dance department of a local community college, and after he had exhausted those possibilities, he moved and obtained a master's degree in dance from a larger university. Celine spoke about living in a remote location where she had to drive several hours to get to dance events. She says, *'Pretty much part of me would die to have to go that long without dancing…*[so] *I was just like, well…I have to dance you know?*' Celine admits to being extremely shy, even bordering on introverted, and before attending a dance event, she would

stand in front of a mirror practicing accepting an invitation from a man to dance. Later in the interview, she reveals she had been sexually abused as a child by a male member of the family. The addition of this information underscored not only the effort of travel for dancing, but overcoming her personal fears and challenges related to interacting with members of the opposite sex. In this sense, Celine brings together the areas of perseverance and effort in her commitment to her experiences with dance and dancing.

The impetus to make the effort is also driven by different reasons; for some it is the desire to improve their dance skills, for others it is tied to the development of their identity, or possibly the need to feel a sense of belonging to a specific social group. Pavi, who dabbled in bharatanatyam throughout her young adult years, was inspired to improve her dance skills after an unexpected meeting with the woman who would later become her mentor. Although she was close to completing an undergraduate degree in physics, she decided to begin her undergraduate degree anew with dance as her focus. However, to do so, her parents also made her complete her BA in physics, and eventually an MA in law. So great was her desire to dance that she did what was necessary to be able to move towards her goals of studying with the woman who had inspired her. This excerpt from her interview serves as an example:

Pavi, 62: India

In this dance area, I started observing this woman…everyone – I watched a long time – everyone either loved her or hated her. She was like extremes. There was no in-between, and I really liked that. I said, this is what I…I mean I wanted to be noticed, maybe that was the thing. She was noticed. You couldn't ignore her. If she's walking…And her smile was like all the way out. So, what is it? She's not beautiful in that sense, she doesn't dress up smartly. Then what is it that is – her? What is so special?

And then I started realizing, maybe this is dance?...Here I realized what I wanted…When I was in the final year of my BSc, it's a three-year course, I decided no more BSc, I don't want a BSc, I will only go for dance. And…that was not acceptable with the family because you can't study dance. You can't take dance as your life. It's not allowed. My father was very open and considerate, so he convinced my mother, 'let her study whatever she wants', and she said, 'ok, no problem'. So, that's how I joined dance.

That [completing her BA in Physics] *was a compromise I had to make with my family. Yes, you'll finish that, and then we will allow you to join dance.*

She [Pavi's mentor] was head of the dance department at that point…she was the guiding spirit [of the dance department] and you may meet and see her…In my first year I had another teacher…and in my second I had another. It was in my third year that I finally went to learn with her directly. But during those two years I was exposed to her and…[she] also realized that…I was joining dance. So, she realized that here is someone with a special interest. So, she encouraged me, helped me, and shared a lot of special things…Normally maybe you study with your own guru. But here it was at the university, so the university was my guru. She was also my guru, because she gave me an insight, to what is dance, and to what is life…

Pavi continued her academic research in bharatanatyam, and studied with her guru until her unexpected death several years later. Currently the head the dance department of university where she gained her degrees, Pavi established a dance company named in honour of her teacher, which she still runs today.

This principle of effort plays an important role in each of the participant's stories and will appear in much of the upcoming discussion. It acts as a form of inspiration as well as a catalyst that has a direct and important impact on the development of the relationship and dance experience.

2.11.2.1.4 To Acquire a Series of Durable Benefits

The fourth element refers to what Stebbins sees as the 'durable benefits' in engaging in serious leisure. They are,

> …self-actualisation, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity.
>
> (Stebbins 2007: 11)

Each of these contributes to the long-term and over-arching ways in which participation in the activity is deepened, and helps to form a larger framework for the perceived necessity for continuation over time. Stebbins clarifies that such benefits are the 'consequences' as opposed to 'rewards' of the pursuit, rather they are anything that the individual sees as being 'appealing…whether physical, social, psychological, or something else' (ibid: 11). It is this concept of a long-lasting alteration that sits at the core of this research, as well as transformative learning theory, and the eight areas mentioned above are representative of the claims made by the participants. For them, the durable benefits are the tangible or measurable elements that they see as having made an impact on their lives through their discovery of dance. The establishment of new communities, an altered sense of self, greater physical fitness, increased confidence, to name a few, are all elements present in their stories. Although there are similar patterns, what each individual considers to be beneficial is unique to their experience. As this concept is representative of the overarching principle for this research, no specific example of durable benefits will be given here. Instead they are presented in the forthcoming discussion and chapters.

2.11.2.1.5 To Develop and Participate in a Unique Ethos Determined by the Social World of the Activity.

A ‘unique ethos’ relates specifically to the associations, attitudes, language usage, and belief systems that are created when one is significantly involved in a particular group or activity. Stebbins refers to sociologist David Unruh and his definition of a ‘social world’ (1980) when examining the creation of an ethos of serious leisure participants and groups. Unruh says,

> A social world must be seen as a unit of social organisation which is diffuse and amorphous in character. Generally larger than groups or organisations, social worlds are necessarily defined by formal boundaries, membership lists, or spatial territories…A social world must be seen as an internally recognisable constellation of actors, organisations, events or practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants. Characteristically, a social world lacks a powerful centralised authority structure and is delimited by…effective communication and not territory nor formal group membership.
>
> (Unruh 1980: 277)

All the participants in this research have self-selected dance and dancing as their primary form of leisure activity. This is important to note in that their membership, or lack thereof given Unruh’s above definition, is one where they can come and go freely without any formal or binding agreement as might be found in other organisations. The choice of membership is determined purely by the dedication of their level of involvement. But the depth of this choice is often revealed by the level of the ethos as created and determined by each group, and the knowledge of the insider ideologies reveals the difference between the serious and casual leisure member. Although each possess an allegiance that is believed to be genuine, their acceptance and integration of the ethos as expressed in the language, dress, and social and personal acceptance (both of and by the group and individual) is thought to play a large role in the classification and qualification of membership.

A danger to this perspective of membership, however, is the potential for exclusion, marginalisation, or the determination of who is an insider or outsider to each group. As stated by Laina, *'We refer to anyone outside of this* [West Coast Swing] *world as "civilians"".* Sharon, who participates in sacred circle dance, spoke openly about her preference of dancing with only members of her Christian faith base. Others referred to the alteration or dissolution of their former social associations after becoming involved with dance.

This sentiment also extends to business associates, dating and romantic partners, and plays an influential role within the creation of a new or modified identity. Although not explicitly stated, the common reference of belonging to the *'dance world'* became such that it tended to parallel what seemed like that of an exclusive sect. Psychologist Lewis J. Rambo refers to such associations within his writings about converts. Presented as a form of 'encapsulation' where 'physical, social, and ideological' (Rambo 1993: 104, 105), beliefs intertwine, the result of which is an altered worldview that differs from the individuals or associations outside of the group. Sometimes deliberate, and other times self-imposed, as the level of involvement increases, the interaction and communication with members outside of the group becomes more difficult because of a lack of shared exposure to the new ways of knowing. Consequently, the acquired behaviours are further adopted and integrated, moving the individual further into their new social world and away from those without a common understanding; often resulting in the formation of, and identification with a new peer group or community that includes the adopted belief system or worldview.

2.11.2.1.6 The Tendency to Identify Strongly in Some Way with Their Chosen Pursuit.

Identity and identification with the selected group or activity forms the basis for the sixth and final piece of Stebbin's framework. Similar in scope to the acceptance of and participation in the unique ethos, which is seen to hold a place that is more external in its representation, the identification with the pursuit reflects a more internal integration. It is more than just adopting patterns of speech, or styles of dress, instead the individual associates him/herself with the activity itself. This form of specific identifier was seen, for example, in the statements of participants' Abram and Deklen, who say, '*I am the Morris'* or '*I am Tango'*. Daniel, who experienced the development of his identity as transgender through his participation with Vogue Fem states, '*When people think of Vogue, I want them to think of Daniel'*. Interestingly, at the start of our interview, Daniel was approached by a stranger who said, '*Aren't you Daniel the dancer?*' Although they did not use the term Vogue dancer, for Daniel, it was a public example of what he sees as his overall persona. What these statements portray are a form of dual identity and identifier that includes both themselves and their dance.

Most of the participants have chosen one style of dance in which they spend the greatest amount of time. However, only a few use specific qualifiers that link them to their genre. Others expressed their identification with their dance through means where, they are,

> …inclined to speak proudly, excitedly, and frequently about them [leisure pursuits] to other people, and present themselves in terms of them when conversing with new acquaintances.
>
> (Stebbins 1982: 257)

In this way, the leisure pursuit is seen by both the individuals and others as a representation of both self and the chosen activity.

Stebbins places this sixth category in a place of importance because it acts as a through-line that connects the prior categories. Although perceived as more cyclical than hierarchical, the formation of an identity/identifier with the chosen activity is considered the culmination of having passed through each of the other areas. When reached, it becomes the anchor from which the earlier five categories continue to remain active, and holds the possibility for continued personal growth.

What this presentation of serious and casual leisure intends is to provide an introduction into the ways in which the participants engage with and refer to their dance activities. For them, it is not a hobby pursued on an occasional basis, but rather a commitment that has had an influential impact on all areas of their lives. The 'durable benefits' as Stebbins says, are both the effects of, and the factors for, their continued participation, and underlie the phrase, '*Dance changed my life'*. The forthcoming chapters will continue to unpack these concepts, integrating them into the overall discussion.

Chapter two has presented the methodological considerations and processes. It defined the field and tools used to conduct the investigation, and the process of recruitment and interviewing. Included was the constructivist process of a thematic analysis of the data included, and this continues to be discussed at the start of the second half of the thesis. The participants and their voices were also further showcased, with both biographical excerpts and

thematic aspects highlighted through the frame of serious and casual leisure. Chapter three continues with a discussion of the central theoretical frames, linking and supporting the stories and claims of being changed as a result of dance and dancing, to theories of transformational learning, flow, and peak experience.

Chapter Three - Frames for Interpretation

3.1 Frames

> A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos…As there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition may be at best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings.
>
> (Mezirow 2000: 3)

A lifetime of experience includes a constant cycle of interpretation, making judgements and decisions, and acquiring knowledge. The creation of meaning happens in tandem with the process of learning, which in turn, creates internal roadmaps to help with future information processing (Mezirow 1990: 1). At times, experiences occur which alter understandings, forcing a reconceptualisation of areas where a new significance has been placed. It is this continuous cycle or effort that Mezirow alludes to in the above quote that produces the contextual order that informs, confronts, and carries the possibility for transforming individual belief systems and/or social worlds.

This thesis explores the stories of individuals and the ways in which they have experienced a personal shift or transformation through their participation with a form of dance. The result of which is a change, over time, in their impressions, opinions, and allocated meaning in regards to dance and dancing within their sphere of experience. Mezirow contends that, 'To make meaning means to make sense of an experience; we make an interpretation of it' (Mezirow 1990:1). In this statement, he is referring to personal experience, but his argument is also applicable to the investigative process

engaged with in my research. As mentioned in Chapter one, it was a challenging process to find a theoretical frame(s) that would allow for the examination of the breadth and depth of the stories, while providing boundaries that support the themes and patterns presented in the data. Personal recollections are complex as they present both “objective” and “subjective” positions, with the job of the researcher being one of unpacking and examining the patterns and pieces to determine how story and experience fit together. Transformative learning theory provided a theoretical set of tools from which to ascertain the structural and holistic qualities, and was therefore appropriate as an overarching interpretive frame. Flexible in its approaches to the analysis of experience, it acts as both a structure as well as an umbrella for other theories, from which the stories can be examined. As such, the focus is therefore not on one frame into which everything will fit, but rather encourages the boundaries to be stretched to incorporate multiple points of view that also consider human experience, dance experience, and transformative process. Other contributing theories include constructive-development (Kegan 1994), flow (Csíkszentmihályi 1990), and peak experience (Maslow 1943). While differing in their specific realms of interpretation, what each have in common is a holistic and humanistic perception of the happenings that can alter experience. This chapter will present each of these interpretations to lay a foundation for the ways in which they will be incorporated into the analysis and discussion.

3.2 Considering Transformation

Finding Their Dance centres on the collection and analysis of stories from individuals who contend that their lives have been transformed as a result of their participation in dance and dancing. Key components that make up the investigation are: the enquiry into the creation of significant units of meaning, the construction of each individual's experience with different forms of dance, the identification of the patterns present across the group of stories, and the questioning of the assertion that participating in dance was the catalyst for the feeling and realisation of change. The vocabularies most often used to describe such an experience are "transformation", or "transformed": words that elicit powerful images, some of which have the probability of being misconstrued if referred to outside of a particular contextual structure. Transformation, or the notion of being transformed, can be conceptually problematic. It suggests thoughts of grand scale alterations through which one is suddenly different from one moment to the next. The process of transformation has been described (James 2002 [1901-1902]), Rambo 1993, Taylor 1998, Mezirow 1991) as developing in one of two ways: slowly through the application of conscious choices, or quickly through a profound happening either joyous or tragic; an insight brought to light by a situation or influence. Many of the participants referred to the latter concept as a form of conversion, describing it in vocabulary rooted in religious doctrine such as the experiencing of, as several of the interviewees put it, a '*Road to Damascus moment'.*[55] Mezirow terms this an epochal transformation or, 'sudden major

[55] The use of this phrase refers to the Biblical story of Paul's (Saul) conversion on the road to Damascus, where, after threatening to persecute the followers of Jesus, a blinding light representing the Lord appeared before him, blinding him for three days until his sight was miraculously restored, after which he went forward to be baptised and become a disciple[55]. This 'Pauline experience' is described as, '…a single event that was thoroughly changing one's life. Thus, the event was viewed as in individualised and psychologised ways. A single individual was changed via a total break with the past, in a relatively permanent

reorientations…often associated to significant life crisis…where the shift is involving dramatic or major changes' (Mezirow 2009:94). The participants also used phrases such as serendipity, synchronicity, or in colloquial terms, 'aha moment',[56] referring to an instance where a new and sudden type of awareness materializes. No matter the form or circumstance, the possibility of the reification of such moments are such that they '…can take on quasi-religious qualities' (Kegan 2009:41). Psychologist Robert Kegan suggests that there are multiple dimensions of transformation that need to be examined individually in order to determine both their inception and impact. Concurring with this, educationalist Jennifer Garvey Berger says, 'the definition of what transformation is depends strongly on who is speaking and from what theoretical stance' (Berger 2003: 340). In their work in organisational leadership, Marcia Daszko and Sheila Sheinberg contend that,

> Transformation is the creation and change of a whole new form, function or structure. To transform is to create something new that has never existed before and could not be predicted from the past.
>
> (Daszco and Sheinberg 2005: np)

It is their view that to be transformed constitutes a profound alteration in the perception related to both the internal and external selves, including relationships, decisions, and mental and physical awareness, as well as an emergence into a new base of knowledge, 'pushing beyond the boundaries

way…The conversion involved an apparent total negation of the old self and the implantation of a new self (Richardson 1985: 164).

[56] An 'Aha!' moment is defined as, 'a moment of sudden realisation, inspiration, insight, recognition, or comprehension. The phrase was made popular by the American television personality Oprah Winfrey, and the above definition was added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 2012. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aha%20moment: (Accessed June 20, 2016)

with which we normally think and feel' (ibid: np). Dance scholar Sara Houston differentiates between the words, "change" and "transformation", when she proposes that although the two, 'are often used interchangeably, the word "change" denotes more superficial alterations than the word "transformation", which implies a transcendence of a state of being rather than merely a shift in perception of oneself or one's surroundings' (Houston 2002:218). It is this perception of transcendence that is suggestive of rising above the old, and an entering into new knowledge and experience. These types of transformation indicate that there has been a moment of disruption where there is a distinct before and after. It also implies that the experience includes a form of liminality, with the new information materialising after a life altering happening. Such an experience is an epistemic transformation, or one where the new knowledge could only be acquired by going through a particular experience (Paul 2014: np).[57]

A recurring theme in the accounts of the participants were the important connections to individuals or groups of people. Houston recognises and gives credence to this when she posits, 'Is transformation personal, or communal?' (Houston 2002:219). Does such an experience happen in isolation, due to an internal set of ideas, memories, meanings, etc.? Or are there additional or external influences, both past and present, such that one is swayed towards taking the risks necessary to accept a meaningful happening when it occurs? As the experience of change for the participants in this research is intrinsically linked to participating in dance, the role of the body and its place in the construction of memory and identity must be addressed (Goffman 1963,

[57] http://m-phi.blogspot.co.uk/2014/08/i-paul-on-transformative-experience-and.html (accessed October 27, 2014)

Douglas 1966, Archetti and Dyck 2003). Research in the field of embodied cognition suggests that 'the mind must be understood in the context of its relationship to a physical body that interacts with the world' (Wilson 2002:625). Therefore, the memories and experience need to be explored from multiple points of view. How *does* the body and the ways in which it moves and is influenced by the world contribute to the choices and experiences of daily life? This question will be explored further in Chapters four to six from the standpoint that although the direct difference takes place within the individual, it can come about because of contact within the context of a larger community or event; in essence, the influence was both internal and external.

What is evident is that there are multiple points of view in regards to what constitutes an experience deemed "transformative", and one definition may not suffice. Therefore, transformation, as used in this thesis, will draw from a variety of perspectives to complement the content of the participant's stories. The primary stance, however, will be directed towards a transformative learning experience; focusing on the *process* through which a new form of knowledge and reality is constructed, and as a result of the experience(s) that are described by the participants as having had a transformative effect on their life. Through the identification of definable patterns amongst the stories, and the investigation into multiple types of experiences, the analysis and discussion emerges. No matter the context of the definition, most important is the understanding of, or reference to, a situation where a definable or recognizable change has taken place; or what the participants consider to be a significant deviation to their personal reality, resulting in the construction of new systems for creating meaning.

Asserting that transformative learning experiences emerge from a variety of situations, educationalist Elizabeth Tisdale posits that they, 'alter our very being, our beliefs, and our core sense of self – the core theme by which we live and move and define our being' (Tisdale 2012: 22). Kegan (2009) suggests that it is this alteration of the core self that produces the information needed for long-term growth and lasting change. It is these two assertions that foster the conversation around the changes defined by the participants, and where transformative learning theory offers a contribution. As stated in Chapter one, a central question posed within transformative learning is, 'how is the individual recognisably different, to both himself and others?' (Clark 2012: 427). To the end of this statement I would add, 'as a result of their participation with dance?' It is the investigation into this question and these areas that are of greatest interest to this research. Presented first will be a summary of transformative learning theory, followed by short introductions of the contributing theories.

3.3 Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory was created by developmental psychologist Jack Mezirow as an account of a way through which adults make meaning of their experiences through formal or informal learning processes. It is, '…understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action' (Mezirow 1996: 162). The original foundation of the theory is grounded in the constructivist perspective that the creation of reality is singular to individuals and their personal interpretations (Merriam and Kim 2012:58), and is described by Fisher-Yoshida as,

> …a process through which adults critically reflect on assumptions underlying their frames of reference and resulting beliefs, values, and perspectives; engage in a reflective rational dialogue about those assumptions; and, as a result, transform their assumptions and frames of reference to make them more inclusive, open, and better justified.
>
> (Fisher-Yoshida et al, 2009: 4)

First introduced in the late 1970s, Mezirow developed the concepts when he was engaged in researching the experiences of adult women returning to university.[58] He determined that because of engaging with new forms of learning and experience, the women in his study underwent a series of changes to their prior thinking that led to what he refers to as a 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow 1978:100), or permanent alteration of prior belief systems. In the creation of his theory, Mezirow drew inspiration from other developmental theorists, namely sociologist and philosopher Jurgan Habermas (1984), philosopher and educator Paulo Friere (1970, 1984),[59] and psychiatrist Carl Jung (1971) (Mezirow 1991, Taylor 2012). Although these mentioned researchers developed theories that were similar in their scope and ideological frameworks, transformative learning theory was thought to have filled a much-needed gap in the area of adult development and education (Mezirow 1994, Taylor 2007, Kitchenham 2008). Much of the early consideration was due in part to the attention paid to the individual as a constructed collective of personal and social influences, through which new forms of meaning, and in turn, senses of self, could emerge.

[58] Education for Perspective Transformation - Women's Re-entry Programs in Community Colleges. Jack Mezirow with contributions by Victoria Marsick. 1978, Centre for Adult Education Teachers College, Columbia University New York, New York.
[59] Friere and Habermas offered the greatest contributions, with Mezirow drawing parallels between his work and Habermas's writing on 'emancipatory learning and communicative action' (Habermas (1984), and Friere's concepts related to 'conscientization,' (Friere 1984), and Jung's developmental theory of 'individuation' (Jung 1971).

The basic characteristics of transformative learning resides in the understanding that when an individual reaches the developmental stage of adulthood, there exists within them both conscious and unconscious values and systems of belief. These may have been produced through social interactions, but result in outlooks and assumptions that forms a personal worldview. As stated by Cranton and Taylor,

> In other words, we adopt the dominant ideology as the normal way to think and act. When we are able to recognize that these beliefs are oppressive and not in our best interests, we can enter into the transformative learning process.
>
> (Cranton and Taylor 2012: 7)

For example, Cedric who grew up in Northern Ireland, stated that his only reference to dance and dancing in childhood were the types of Irish dances that as he says, '*Were a part of another agenda'*; meaning the representation and celebration of Irish cultural heritage at a time when this presented social and religious division. Although he accepted these norms in childhood, in adolescence he recognised and rejected them, (and all dance/dancing), to protest against what he saw as an oppressive cultural ideology. As an adult, he moved to Dublin and eventually England, where he became involved in integrated theatre and dance groups. Through this work he began to experience dancing from a different perspective, making him realise that his former viewpoints were no longer relevant.

Focusing specifically on the learning and meaning making processes of adults, transformative learning addresses the differences in the expression of such experiences; citing both verbal and cognitive forms of processing as

ways in which adult learners frame and integrate new experiences and insights. As stated by psychologist Edward Taylor, the theory is one that is 'uniquely adult, abstract and idealized, grounded in the nature of human communication' (Taylor 2007: 174). The theory presupposes that the decisions we make as adults are based upon the experiences and assumptions that have been assimilated through personal and cultural contacts, resulting in a set of defined opinions and actions. Mezirow posits,

> Transformation theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others.
>
> (Mezirow 2000:8)

When engaging in learning processes, as well as personal and social interactions, these belief systems can be challenged and re-evaluated for new knowledge to develop. Through an exploration that includes intra and inter-personal discourse, transformative learning theory sheds light upon the how and why adults come to make decisions in their lives, and the ways these choices work to change perspectives of meaning. As will be seen in the second half of the thesis, many of the participants formed opinions and beliefs about dance and dancing based on experiences, or lack thereof, in childhood and adolescence. For some, the connections produced views that were neutral and/or without much meaningful impact. Dancing was simply an activity done in physical education class, or at school social dance events. Active participation was not a part of their immediate social and cultural circles, and so was regarded with disinterest. Other participants had distinct memories with dancing and moving to music where verbal comments or

implied reactions from important people in their life caused visceral responses and particular ideas about dance and dancing. As such, there was a rejection to the form on levels personal and social, resulting in belief systems grounded in internalised narratives from the past.

Mezirow contends that throughout each person's life, every experience holds the opportunity to construct units of meaning, and in turn, each unit is interpreted and integrated based upon our prior knowledge. This knowledge serves as a 'guide for future action' (Mezirow 2000:5), and rests within both our conscious and unconscious systems of belief, which are developed through our personal and social interactions. He states that as one develops,

> Learning might be intentional, the result of deliberate inquiry; incidental, a by-product of another activity involving intentional learning; or mindlessly assimilative. Aspects of both intentional and incidental learning take place outside learner awareness.
>
> (Mezirow 2000:5)

Thus, both what we learn and how we learn takes place through various scenarios, some chosen and some applied, but are the essential building blocks through which the world is viewed. Mezirow suggests that there are four stages through which learning occurs,

> …the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, the elaboration on existing knowledge and skills, the revision of meaning schemes (beliefs and values), and the revision of meaning perspectives (a larger view of the world).[60]
>
> (Mezirow 2000, Cranton and Kroth 2014: 1)

[60] In earlier writings, Mezirow presented these four stages as, 'within existing meaning schemes, through new meaning schemes; through a transformation of meaning schemes, and through a transformation of meaning perspectives' (Mezirow 1991, Schlattner 1997: 19).

For example, for the participants, through learning and becoming familiar with a specific form of dance, new units of meaning developed, beginning a process of continual construction. As such, the prior belief systems produced through personal experience, or assumed as a result of general socialisation, were altered to reflect an acceptance of new understandings. This scenario of neutrality or rejection, to acceptance and integration is not limited to dancing only as a physical activity or scholarly interest, but also produced the elimination or alteration of long held convictions that extends beyond their personal experience.

Social psychologist Ellen Langer divides these types of learning into what she terms 'mindful or mindless', the former as being a state where openness and awareness to new opportunities are at the forefront, and the latter where the interpretations from learning are solely based upon past experiences and actions (Langer 1998:4). It is the process of movement from the "mindless to the mindful" that is at the centre of transformative learning theory; or more precisely, what Mezirow calls autonomous thinking, as ways to, 'negotiate his or her own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings, rather than to simply act on those of others' (Mezirow 2000:10).[61] In order to do this, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and assumptions, both personal and social, must be overcome, resulting in a perspective transformation, which is the final step and overall goal in the process of transformative learning.

[61] Mezirow's 'autonomous thinking' is in line with Jung's presentation of individuation which is described as, 'the process of separating oneself from the collective of humanity and reintegrating with humanity with a new understanding of who we are and where we have been' (Jung 1971 in Cranton and Kroth 2014:1).

Considered to be both a process and a product, a perspective transformation is cited by Mezirow as the journey one must pass through, as well as the end result of the knowledge exploration. He says,

> Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings.
>
> (Mezirow: 1992: 167)

These types of transformations are usually representative of the third and fourth stages of learning mentioned above, and are triggered by a form of 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1978, 1991) or life transition that does not fit a current perspective known as a 'habit of mind or a frame of reference' (Mezirow 2000). Circumstantial transitions rather than planned events, the disorienting dilemmas are either, 'epochal, a sudden, dramatic, reorienting insight, or 'incremental, involving a progressive series of transformations in related points of view that culminate in a transformation of a habit of mind' (ibid: 21) that signals a willingness for change to occur, and results in this new stage of understanding, or a full perspective transformation and alteration of world view.

As will be seen in Chapters four to six, the journey from childhood and adolescent experiences, to the discovery through an encounter or dilemma which fosters an introduction to dance events and interactions, takes many twists and turns. Each story presents differing plotlines and circumstances, with some including dramatic epochal types of transformational moments, and

others occurring slowly over time. What they all have in common are lives where dance is included and engaged with in ways that were absent at other times. While for most this is expressed in an active physical participation, it also includes engaging with others as dance DJ's, teachers, event coordinators, academic researchers, benefactors, and audience members. In other words, the alteration of their world-view regarding dance is such that it encompasses the genre in a fashion that is more than participating in a few classes each week. Many referred to their involvement with dance as a '*lifestyle*', which reflects a larger perception of its influence in their lives. Even if only one style of dance was the focus of participation, the reflection of a perspective transformation was evident in the inclusion of multiple aspects related to the genre. Before featuring a case study from my fieldwork, further discussion on the different 'meaning structures' (ibid: 16), which make up the distinct categories within transformative learning theory: frames of reference, habits of mind, and points of view,[62] will be presented.

3.3.1 Frames of Reference

Transformative learning theory is grounded in the constructivist philosophy that meaning is generated through a process of reassessing personal and social assumptions. A frame of reference, or meaning perspective, is:

> …the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions…It provides the context for meaning making within which we choose what and how a sensory experience is to be construed and/or appropriated.
>
> (Mezirow 2000:16)

[62] In his original presentation of the theory, these two terms were known as 'meaning schemes' and 'meaning perspectives'. They were changed in the late 1990s, but are still used interchangeably throughout the literature (Cranton and Kroth 2014: 4).

Cranton and Kroth refer to Mezirow and what he identified to be the different types of meaning perspectives,

> …epistemic (about knowledge and how we obtain knowledge), sociolinguistic (understanding ourselves and social worlds through language), and psychological (concerned with our perceptions of ourselves, largely based upon childhood experiences).
>
> (Cranton and Kroth 2014:4)

Incorporated within these personal and social messages are aspects both internal and external, which govern the manner through which the interactions are driven, and build interpretive scenarios containing the meaningful information that forms opinions, judgements, and a sense of self. Mezirow states that these frames of reference model our personal 'lines of action', or somewhat biased notions that form intellectual and physiological pathways. These lines tend to become ingrained within mental and physical processing of experience, causing 'a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions' (Mezirow 2009:92). Kegan refers to a frame of reference as the ways in which we 'colour' our world, with the choices made reflecting specific affiliations such as those related to family or societal relations (Kegan 2009:44). In short, they provide a foundational structure to which a life becomes anchored, and to oppose or change such a structure can be a difficult and challenging prospect. A frame of reference is dominated by two categories through which meaning schemes are created: habits of mind and points of view.

3.3.2 Habits of Mind and Points of View

A habit of mind is ‘a set of assumptions – broad, generalized, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience’ (Mezirow 2000:17). Areas such as moral or religious beliefs, aesthetic tastes, psychological conceptions, and cultural ideologies are included; the areas of life which might be considered fixed or ingrained unless confronted by situations that would alter such understandings. Most often established from early childhood through adolescence, these habitual convictions are a reflection of enculturated social and cultural norms and mores. Psychologist and philosopher John Dewey suggests that habits are a means through which the world is navigated, forming a personal intelligence that asserts influence throughout the course of a lifetime. They serve as both ‘an enabling condition and as a source of agency’ (Dewey 1957:21). Cranton refers to these thought processes as ‘grooves in the mind – the way we automatically think, feel, and act without question or further thought’ (Cranton and Kroth 2014: 4). To not become trapped in these pre-conceived agents from which habits are created, a flexible mechanism of response must be adopted when new situations arise. Only then can new knowledge be acquired and applied, as well as a sense of fluidity in and with the surrounding world (Dewey 1957:105). As habits can be rigidly reinforced by social and personal expectations, the ability to alter these ingrained opinions may require a multi-varied effort for transformation.

Psychologist Elena Cuffari considers habits to be a contributing element to both the physical and cognitive, each area working together as a process of response and decision-making. Considered to be embodied in that they contribute to the ways in which people conduct themselves, she classifies

personal habits into two areas, neurobiological and experiential, saying that in their multiplicity they are, ‘the enacted practices that constitute our daily being…our embodied practices form us; they constrain and enable us; they cultivate and activate habits’ (Cuffari 2011:535). The assimilation of these personal habits constitute what Mezirow refers to as a ‘constellation of belief’ (Mezirow 1997:6), or a type of personal scaffolding into which all the internal and external influences are incorporated and organised, and once formed are quite resistant to modification. Habits or habits of mind therefore, are constant conscious and unconscious controllers of the means through which human beings situate and accommodate within their surroundings. The information they provide serve as referential touch points and accumulated assumptions that often require a significant happening to be adjusted.

Such habits of mind were demonstrated in the participant’s stories primarily through their denial of dance participation in childhood. For some this was as a result of lack of opportunity or financial resources, resulting in a notion that dance participation was beyond their reach. As they grew into adulthood, and social groups and interests in other areas developed, dancing as an activity existed outside of the realm of immediate possibility, so was dismissed in favour of other endeavours. For others, the habits developed out of difficult or traumatic social encounters in childhood or adolescence that formed a habitual mental message that dancing would result in an embarrassing or unpleasant outcome. As will be seen in later chapters, in both situations, the alterations which changed these belief systems came about through an important individual, a crisis, or an extra-ordinary encounter.

Less stringent, a point of view is the overall expression of the habit of mind. It 'comprises clusters of meaning schemes…that tacitly direct and shape a specific interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality' (Mezirow 2000:18). It is the way in which experiences are justified and explored through sharing stories with others and reflecting upon their responses. Ideally, to achieve continued growth and meaning potential, a point of view is open to those of others. It is in this way that an overall frame of reference might be altered. Educationalist Dorothy MacKeracher asserts, 'Transformational learning happens when subjective experience meets imposed knowledge and there is a conflict between the two' (MacKeracher 2012:343). To resolve such a possible conflict, the 'trying on' of another's point of view is a way in which to gain access to new knowledge, and serves as a problem-solving device when in the process of moving towards new choices and decisions. Habits of mind are much less accessible to sampling, their permeability being more fixed and difficult to access (Mezirow 1997, 2000:20). The catalyst for change occurs when a frame of reference becomes 'problematic' or discordant with the experiences of life, and needs to be re-examined and re-interpreted to 're-frame' the problem (Mezirow, 2000:19). Therefore, transformative learning comes as a result of a process of knowledge acquisition where new points of view are annexed, with the possibility of altering a habit of mind, resulting in the revision of a frame of reference. This process includes highlighting the issue and engaging in a period of questioning that includes the other aspect that defines transformative learning theory, critical or self-reflection, and discourse.

3.3.3 Reflection and Discourse

Mezirow argues that meaning, 'exists within ourselves, rather than in external forms such as books and the personal meanings that we attribute to our experiences are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication' (Mezirow 1991:xiv). Considered as 'communicative learning' Mezirow describes Habermas's theory of the same title in the following way,

> Understanding in communicative learning requires that we assess the intentions behind words; the coherence, truth, and appropriateness of what is being communicated; the truthfulness and qualifications of the speaker; and the authenticity of expressions of feeling. That is, we must become critically reflective of the assumptions of the person communicating…In communicative learning, we determine the justification of a problematic belief or understanding through rational discourse at a tentative best judgement. The only alternatives to discourse for justifying a belief is to appeal to tradition, authority, or force.
>
> (Mezirow 2000: 86)

In other words, after addressing the belief within a person's own frame of reference, through sharing and interpretation with others, it is further transformed. This critical discourse is an important stage in transformative learning as it allows individuals to present their new points of view, weigh it against those of others, and make informed decisions as to the integration of the newly formed base of knowledge. This process of re-assessing or re-framing points of view, produces new knowledge and meaning. Mezirow argues that, 'To make meaning means to make sense of an experience; we make an interpretation of it…Critical reflections involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs are built' (Mezirow 1990: 1). These interpretations are best achieved by employing techniques of reflection that allow for the building of a dialogical framework, providing a multi-angled

perspective from which the new knowledge can be considered. It is only through this process of evaluation and re-evaluation that the final stage of perspective transformation can be completed.

In the almost forty years since its inception, transformative learning theory and its exploration into adult learning and experience has grown and broadened through the expansion of its research periphery. The flexibility it provides in exploring human experience makes it accessible for the integration of other theories as well as offering insight into further explorations of human 'ways of knowing',[63] attracting scholars from a variety of fields of study. Although still used primarily within Western contexts, what has made this theory useful to so many varieties of disciplines are the adaptability and application to diverse scenarios within the learning processes and experiences of adults. So expansive has been the interest that Mezirow titled his book published in 2000, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspective on a Theory in Progress*. In it, he addresses the journey the theory has taken, and acknowledges both the criticisms and expansions. He also adds that, as the title of the book suggests, there is much further research to be undertaken in both transformative learning and adult developmental theories, and encourages scholars in all fields to continue to take the work forward.

[63] Michael Woolman in his book, *Ways of Knowing: Introduction to Theory of Knowledge* (2006), identifies eight ways in which knowledge is gained. They are 'emotion, faith, imagination, intuition, language, memory, reason, and sense perception'. This grouping, which is attributed to the International Baccalaureate scholar's programme, will be referred to in this research.

3.3.4 Case Study of Transformative Learning

Below is the story of Matthew, a forty-eight-year-old dancer and dance teacher from America who currently resides in Mexico. His story is presented here as a short case-study to demonstrate how I applied the various above mentioned processual stages of a transformative learning experience to illustrate the incorporation of the data and theory.

Matthew describes his younger persona as one who was only interested in books and '*brainy pursuits'*. He was not an active child who participated in sports, spending most of his time engaged in homework and cognitive-based activities.

Basically, I was a student. Once I (entered) the fifth grade, I did homework every day. Basically, from fifth grade to twelfth grade, I did about five hours of homework every day. On Saturdays, probably about two hours. And on Sundays, probably about eight hours.

In his interview, he was very assertive about the level of disengagement experienced between mind and body as a young man, even to the point of feeling embarrassment towards and about his body (*Frame of reference/meaning perspective*). Matthew attended a top American university where he was adventurous in his academic career, but again chose social groups, areas of research, and activities that were more grounded in the cerebral than the physical (*Point of view*).

I had friends who just didn't do all of that [dancing]*. And I think… I think I had a little bit of a competitive personality in academia. I thought: Here I am; I might as well be the best.*

As such, his awareness of dance, and of his body was limited, so much so that it was continually rejected (*Habit of mind*) in favour of more cognitive endeavours. After graduating he moved to the west coast of America and took a job as an investment banker. One day he experienced a kind of personal and professional break down, and claims that the stress of the environment, as well as the constant rejection of his physical self for so long, forced him to consider making a change (*Crisis*/*Presentation of the problem*). His first response was to travel, and he went to Europe for one year.

I packed everything up, and I went to Europe. And I was depressed. And I finally made it back to L.A., nervous, and stressed, and lost.

Upon returning to the United States he decided not to continue in the financial sector, choosing instead to work in a pre-school with young children (*Rejection of personal/individual/social expectations and assumptions*). It was during this period of working with young children that he began to experience a change in the way he perceived his body. He was also invited to a writing course where the start of the sessions included a physical warm-up.

An acquaintance of mine invited me to take a gay men's writing class, which was offered at Highways [a performing arts group]*, which was in Santa Monica. So, I started to take a weekly Gay Men's Writing Class. They started class with a warm-up, like you would in a dance class. And for two, three, four weeks,* [I had a desire to do] *dance. It came into my subconscious. I was not doing anything else,* [so I was in] *limbo, in my mid-twenties.*

His awareness continued to expand when he took a movement-based course on working with people with disabilities. While attending this workshop, he met some dance students from a local university, with whom he spoke about how movement could be used with his pre-school students (*Dialogue*/*Reflection*).

Despite his nervousness and inexperience as a dancer, he decided to enrol in a beginner's contemporary dance class. He began to become more aware and comfortable with his body, and encouraged by his new friends, continued taking dance classes in a variety of genres (*Trying on another's point of view/reflection/critical self-reflection*).

And so, I signed up at [the] *Community College – my local community college – in Modern Dance 1, and Beginning Voice. And that was the beginning. I was a complete disaster in singing! I couldn't hear notes! The teacher would pray for me, before I started singing, so that things wouldn't be a disaster! And then modern dance was kind of like a "half-disaster." I was not good, by any means – but it was not nearly as bad as the singing. I thought, "There is something in this for me! This is fulfilling my body! This is great – this is fulfilling two needs!" …So, I kind of felt a connection with dance, like: "There's something in this for me!" Creative, and embodied, and I hadn't ever really had a chance to be creative and embodied while I'd studied when I was younger– so, it was kind of fulfilling two needs – fulfilling two gaps in my personal path.*

He found that the classes that he liked the best were ones that utilised improvised movement, as it finally allowed him to express physically all that he felt had been '*locked inside'.*

…whatever movement came from me – from my body, from my life, from my questions, problems, and thoughts – whatever emerged was a valid movement. It rarely was "dancey dance".[64] *I hadn't had a history of technique. I had come to it quite late. Whatever it was, was fine. If it was something only with the arms, then it was something with the arms. I think the responses worked for me, because there was a resonance to the movement and the meaning for me. It made sense. All the technique classes never taught sufficiently so that I could create internally, from a sensory place. For me, it was all about shapes and making shapes in the mirror; and is the shape correct, on the correct beat. Choreography, from the very beginning, was connected into me as a human being.*

[64] Referring to a non-normative perception of technique based forms of dance.

After completing all the dance classes offered at the local university, Matthew felt competent and confident enough as a dancer (*Altered frame of reference and habit of mind*) to enrol in a Master's programme in dance education (*Transformative learning as a result of an altered meaning perspective/autonomous perspective*).

I thought, 'I've done all of the dance [classes] *at* [the local] *college – so now what? So, I thought, 'Well, I'm only living five to ten minutes from* [a larger university with a dance department]*;' and then I thought, "I'm going to do a Master's in Dance'…This was the first time in my life where I actually had a path. I was doing this focused thing that I wanted to do! Never before had it occurred to me what was my path.* [Dance] *started to emerge as my path… it was basically, "Dance, dance, dance, dance, dance." I was very happy, because sometimes, I was dancing many hours a day; and I'd like run from class, I'd be getting a taco, and then I'd be eating the taco, and then dancing again. The beauty there was that I really met some teachers who became major influences on me and spoke to me, in terms of improvisation.*

After completing this degree, he opened a successful business in California where he created a pedagogy to train others to be full-time dance educators, and deliver dance and education services to classroom teachers and their students.

I ended up having a faculty of about eight or nine teachers that I trained, and it was a very successful business; it grew quite a bit! We ended up being in about forty schools - it was a very successful model. We were really trying to transform the school environment [and] *we did that for about five years. We gave a lot to teachers; we had yoga classes for teachers, after school… and we had very informal performances…It was a really successful model, and we were able to* [make] *connections. All of our funding was through* [State] *Arts Education money…*

After six years, because of serious cut-backs in the State and local education budget, he was forced to dissolve this business and move to Mexico with his partner. While deciding upon his next professional work, he took time to reflect on his trajectory of dance experiences (*Critical self-reflection*). He was able to

recognize the transformational process that he experienced (*Complete perspective transformation*) and decided that he wanted to create that for others (*Emancipatory education*).

I thought that "This thing has really transformed me as a mature person," and so I started to have a desire to teach community dance to people who had not been dancers necessarily, but I could offer Improv and Choreography to people, to give greater dance to their lives.

I mentioned to you that I felt like it was filling these holes – that I had been this very academic, cerebral person, and that I'd had these holes in my being! One [hole] *was the arts and creativity, and the other [hole] was physicality. So, it was like, "Oh my gosh, you know, the things that I need to be a whole, sane person, here they are!" So, I felt like, "This is contributing something to me that has a deep value for me, as a spiritual, intellectual, social being." And I said that if it can do that for me – for someone like me who never danced, who never moved, who didn't do sports, who didn't do painting class – think of the potential that this could have for all of those people who have lives so cut off from art and from movement! And if I can contribute a little bit to what dance has given me – which was beautiful – to the world in some way, and touch people's lives with some dance, then that's really something that I can believe in –* [something] *that I know that is changing the world in some small way.*

Although not currently his primary profession, he has continued his education in dance and is interested in creating dance classes that encourages holistic movement practices. He has also continued what he sees as his mission of bringing dance to ordinary people by beginning a dance group for women in their 50s and 60s whom he met at his local park. He states,

Dance is one of the essentials of life. It should be there right after food and shelter and love.

Dance is a 'home place'.

Matthew's story presents the basic fundamentals of transformative learning, and reflects the primary aspects of the process. Whilst Mezirow presents an extended multi-staged approach, it bears a contextual resemblance to ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep's tri-staged theory of liminality (1960).

Where the two approaches converge is in the shared view that life changes occur along a processual spectrum, which are marked by clearly defined stages or moments. Although Van Gennep's research focused on ritual rites of passage, both models posit that the participant enters into a time of separation, during which new knowledge is gained, and finally, emerges from the process altered from having gone through the experience. Mezirow developed a more detailed system, of evaluating what he calls 'phases of meaning' (Mezirow 2000: 22). He suggests that order for the perspective transformation to become fully illuminated, one must pass through each of these phases, although not necessarily in this order.

1) A disorienting dilemma.
2) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame.
3) A critical assessment of assumptions.
4) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared.
5) Exploration of new roles, relationships, and actions.
6) Planning a course of action.
7) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan.
8) Provisional trying of new roles.
9) Building competence and self-confidence in the new roles and relationships.
10) A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Looking again at the story of Matthew, the order of his process of transformative learning might be seen as the following:

1) A disorienting dilemma. (*Leaving his job as a corporate banker*)
2) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame. (*A personal and professional break that resulted in a year-long trip to Europe*)
3) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared. (*The realisation that he was not required to return to corporate banking.*)
4) Exploration of new roles, relationships, and actions. (*Choosing to work in pre-school education. Attending the workshop where new relationships with dancers were formed, resulting in the exploration of dance classes at the local university*)
5) A critical assessment of assumptions. (*Reassessing the belief of I don't dance/am not a physical person*)
6) Planning a course of action. (*Enrolling in the dance classes at the local university, and eventually the MA Dance Education programme*)
7) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan. (*Completing both the dance classes at the local university as well as the MA Dance programme*)
8) Provisional trying of new roles. (*Creating a new business where dance and dance education were his chosen profession*)
9) Building competence and self-confidence in the new roles and relationships. (*Creating a pedagogical model that is transferred to other teachers and students*)
10) A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (*Complete identity shift and integration of the core self through the process of transformative learning as related to dance*)

Although each example is a simplified model of the larger application of the theory, it begins to provide a structural prototype from which a detailed examination might emerge. Each of the points represents areas that provide opportunities for further examination, as will be seen in Chapters four, five, and six.

3.3.5 'What *Form* Transforms?' - Transformative vs Informative Learning

Developmental psychologist Robert Kegan examines the process of transformative learning in his chapter titled, *What "Form" Transforms* (2009), by positing that there are different types or 'forms' of experience and knowing that exist and transition from one form to another within the psyche. As such, each contains the possibility to either inform, transform, or be transformed from one to the other. By changing the nature of the *form* that creates the systems of meaning and belief, learning becomes more elaborate and/or flexible (Berger 2003). In my discussion, these forms are primarily related to Mezirow's frames of reference, but they may also be applied to other points of view. Kegan says,

> The *form* that is undergoing trans*form*ation needs to be better understood; if there is no form, there is no transformation…At the heart of a *form* is a way of knowing…thus genuine transformational learning is always to some extent an epistemological change rather than merely a change in behavioural repertoire…
>
> (Kegan 2009:41)

Tisdale continues this line of thinking by asking, 'what form transforms what? Some forms transform one's *being*, whereas others transform one's *thinking*…' (Tisdale 2012:25). Tisdale compares this concept to a musical composition where a core melody may be divided into many themes and variations as the piece expands. Each one relates to the core, but has its own patterns/structures/rules according to its place within the larger whole. Therefore, each type of transformational learning is dependent upon the context in which the content is placed or experienced. No matter the situation, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, or psychological,

> The "form" that transforms in both situations likely involves multiple dimensions of being…but one domain is likely more primary than others, depending on what is being transformed.
>
> (Tisdale 2012:25)

It is for this reason that careful consideration is paid to the thematic strands and patterns expressed in the stories, with attention also given to finding the multiple form(s) that have served in the process.

Kegan distinguishes between the multiplicity of forms by presenting the classifications of informative and transformative learning (Kegan 2009:42). The former being one that may enrich knowledge and experience, but does not create the kind of change upon the form that the latter provides. In other words, informative learning does not alter 'our core sense of self' (Tisdale 2012:22), but instead brings further awareness and less dramatic shifts to what it is we already know.

To illustrate this point, the story of Richard, who participates in a ballet-based Dance for Parkinson's[65] class in London, is presented.

Richard, 63: UK

Richard was a very prominent businessman with successful printing companies in the UK, the Middle East, and the United States. Throughout the interview he spoke about his financial success, referencing the locations in London where he lived, the exclusive schools his children attended, the expensive cars he drove, and his prior net worth. In his mid-50s, while living in Texas, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which he claims, was the central cause of the failure of his business, his marriage, and his future financial status. After divorcing, and at the time of the interview, he had relocated to an upper-class London neighbourhood, where he lives with two of his siblings. He was introduced to Dance for Parkinson's classes by his London physician who thought it might be helpful for both his mental and physical health.

Richard spoke about his participation in the class in positive terms, citing that it has increased his physical and social confidence, and brought new awareness about his body and the ways in which it functions. He also conveyed the importance of the community and the comfort that he takes in participating in an activity where there are others who are sharing a similar experience. But throughout the interview, there is no indication that his

[65] The Dance for Parkinson's programme attended by Richard is a ballet based movement programme sponsored by a major London ballet company, where individuals with the disease are welcome to participate. As stated by dance researchers Sara Houston and Ashley McGill, 'In ballet there is an emphasis on posture, body alignment and projection of eye focus and limb extension, as well as whole-body coordination. It is a form of dance that can challenge one's strength and stability and also encourages a wide range of movement qualities and dynamics'. They assert that although there may be physical benefits as a part of participation, other benefits recorded include those that are related to personal confidence, and social and inter-personal relationships (Houston and McGill 2013: 104).

participation in the class has changed his core set of beliefs, or prior assumptions regarding dance. He has always been an avid supporter of the arts and dance, serving as a patron to a major ballet company while living in the US, and he continues to attend dance performances in London. Although prior to his diagnosis he was not an active dance participant, he did not seem overly surprised that it has now become one of his primary forms of socialisation and activity in his life; it was an opportunity that came about as a part of his life *with* Parkinson's. And while it is enjoyable and obviously has had an impact, according to the fundamental tenets for transformative learning, his participation with dance falls more into the category of Kegan's normative for informative learning.

It is more likely then, that the situation of transformative learning that currently influences Richard's life is his diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. Not only did this have a significant impact on his personal and social worldview, it challenged him to confront his systems of belief regarding illness, and it caused (and still causes) him to have to make important life changes. In other words, the medical diagnosis is more likely the primary domain where the transformative knowledge resides and continues to provide information. It is at the core, and represents the centre of the constellation of belief; and thus, much of information and decision making is either internalised or projected from this place.

Although the topic of identity will be addressed in Chapter six, it is mentioned here to contrast between the two types of learning. Whereas several participants stated that the alteration of their sense of self was connected to their dance participation, Richard, from the start of the interview, established

his identity as being *'a very happy Parkie'*. His self-identification may also indicate, through his choice of vocabulary (as well as his big smile and relaxed body language) that he has reached the point where the new knowledge has been disseminated and reached the point of integration with the whole of his identity. This is what MacKeracher (2012) classifies as her fourth stage of transformative learning, the integration of identity.[66] She distinguishes this as something one can name, and that, through the process of time and self-reflection, are patterns of new action that are introduced and interwoven. When these behaviours are no longer consciously chosen, the new aspects of the identity, or 'perceptions of self' are considered to have been fully integrated. Considered to be the most difficult stage, she believes that this phase might be a separate transformative process in itself, arguing,

> I think that this phase involves another type of experience in the transformative process and that the transformation is incomplete without it. Sometimes the transformation remains incomplete if the action steps do not lead to a new perception of self.
>
> (MacKeracher 2012:348)

In the case of Richard this is important to make note of, and I especially return to his use of the word 'happy' in his identifying phrase. For quite a while, Richard was in denial about his diagnosis, going to many specialists in search of an answer for why he was feeling ill. This went on for many years until he could no longer deny the existence of the disease. Although at the time this caused a crisis and upheaval, he not only now accepts that Parkinson's is a

[66] MacKeracher has created four stages of transformative learning that she juxtaposes firstly on that of her own personal experiences. In her article, she discusses each phase using examples from her life, and clearly stating that their creation was as a way of examining her own experiences.

part of his life, and he has found a way to live, interact, and possibly find some joy – with the dance class playing a substantial role. Therefore, perhaps his participation was in fact representative of both informative learning, as well as a small transformation within a larger transformational process; in that it served to take him from the identity of just a person living with Parkinson's Disease, to a dancing and '*very happy Parkie'*.

3.3.6 Transformative Learning and Arts Research

Early criticisms of transformative learning theory centred on the rationalist underpinnings that were felt to overlook aspects that included the artistic, emotional, and spiritual within experience (See Boyd 1990, Dirkx 1997, Scott 1997). Mezirow conceded to this observation and addressed it by beginning to include examples in his work of alternative or affective experiences that could result in transformative learning. He says,

> Art, music, and dance are alternative languages. Intuition, imagination, and dreams are other ways of making meaning. Inspiration, empathy, and transcendence are central to self-knowledge and to drawing attention to the affective quality and poetry of human experience.
>
> (Mezirow 2000:6)

Over the past few decades as interest in transformative learning has expanded, researchers have argued that artistic engagement fosters and enables experiences of change because they bypass the rational processes of cognition, allowing for alternative forms of education and expression to occur. Merriam and Kim argue,

> When the learner's imaginations and intuition are engaged in diverse and expressive ways, learners have a better understanding of both their affective and conceptual meaning making, which leads to a holistic approach to transformative learning.
>
> (Merriam and Kim 2012: 64)

Other authors concur with the above statement, and cite examples in their research and accompanying literature. Lipson Lawrence (2012) discusses how engaging with the arts, either as a viewer or participant, can induce an experience of transformative learning. She says, 'The arts take us out of our heads and into our bodies, hearts, and souls in ways that allow us to connect more deeply with self and others' (Lipson Lawrence 2012: 471). She challenges Mezirow's original premise of transformative learning as a rational process, by using the term 'extra rational', which is considered to go beyond that which is rational, and is inclusive of experiences that are induced by other means of expression such as art, music, dance, and other symbol based expressions (ibid:472). In his research about the use of transformative learning as a way to restore or 'nurture the soul', educationalist John M. Dirkx (1997) suggests that acquisition of knowledge should address the whole person in aspects including physical, emotional and spiritual. Nurturing the soul takes place when participating in activities that, 'bring one's inner life together with the outer world' (Dirkx 1997:85). These often include those which are related to the spiritual, literary, and artistic. Through doing so, the process of learning takes on additional layers of expression and meaning that deepens the sense of self and value in the world. Theatre director Tessa Mendel (2015) presents methods for teaching and learning with the intention

of experiencing transformative learning through the creative process. Although not specifically situated within one artistic genre, the goal of the exercises are to bring together theory and practice to develop a more multi-dimensional approach. Primarily rooted in foundational aspects of Mezirow's work, Mendel again brings in the "extra-rational" considerations that allow for the inclusions of learning transpiring from areas aesthetic, artistic, and emotional. Continuing this, educational researchers Jacqueline Davis-Manigaulte, Lyle Yorks, and Elizabeth Kasl (2006) refer to the concept of presentational knowing, which embraces the formation of knowledge from areas conceptual and intuitive. This includes 'engagement with music, all the plastic arts, dance, movement, and mime, as well as all forms of myth, fable, allegory, story, and drama' (Davis-Manigaulte et. al 2006: 27). They contend that the process of working within these subjects moves the transformational learning into the affective realms of exploration, providing greater depths of meaning as a result of addressing the whole person as learner.

However, the focus of much of the literature I surveyed mentions 'the arts', of which dance may be justifiably included, but is not often singled out. Connections between transformative learning and references specifically to dance are few, with most of the related research aligning itself more with somatics, embodiment, or the recognition of the body as a site of knowledge. 'Body narrative' is the term developmental psychologist M. Carolyn Clark (2012) refers to as that which 'can give voice to the body by telling stories *of* the body rather than *about* the body' (Clark 2012:428). In her writing, she relates the story of her experience of having a knee replacement as a way of gathering new knowledge *about* her body *from* her body. This new type of

information, represented primarily in the physical rather than the cognitive, serves as the premise for her transformational learning, bringing awareness more towards narratives other than that which are verbally expressed. Dance educator Carol Press (2002), addresses transformative learning theory in relation to the examination of the "self" through the process of dance and creative expression. Intended more for dance educators, this text locates itself in the genre of eliciting transformative learning through the process of teaching dance to others.

Aligning with Mezirow's inclusion of 'other ways of knowing', dance researcher Celeste Snowber (2012) considers dance and dancing as a site of physical and emotional knowledge. She presents dance as a place where memories are stored, and contends that 'Dance is needed as we recover what it means to be adults in the world…' with the reminder of childhood freedoms serving as the reconnector of body and soul (Snowber 2012: 56). In her 2013 PhD thesis (unpublished), Elizabeth Boleyn uses transformative learning theory to examine the experiences of adult women during their training process with a movement form known as Nia. Her research is grounded in what she calls finding the 'voice of the body', which entails 'delving into the physical dimension of somatic transformative learning' (Boleyn 2013: vii), to explore personal and social embodied learning from perspectives both transformational and phenomenological. Dance researchers Fiona Bannon and Duncan Holt (2012) write about what they consider to be a process of transformative learning that occurs between teacher and student through the process of touch when learning and teaching dance. As a central question, they ask, 'In what ways has touch been a positive feature in your learning?'

(Bannon and Holt 2012: 6). Although the university students whom they interviewed express an awareness of a 'shift in the perception…with respect to themselves and their learning in the discipline', there is no mention of the perceived alteration of a core sense of self which is a key factor in transformative learning. In their enquiry about dance experience and embodied knowledge, dance researchers Maria Tsouvala and Kostas Magos (2016) acknowledge, under the auspices of transformative learning, that 'Dance as a self-actualizing field of study could be connected to the perspectives of transformative learning theory' (Tsouvala and Magos 2016: 30). Whilst saying this, however, at times their work is more grounded in phenomenology, with considerations of their research process reflecting transformative learning. What is critical for me though, was the attention they paid to the experiences of the dancers, and the engagement with key aspects of the theory such as critical reflection and disorienting dilemma. As such, the analysis possesses a depth of perspective for both the researchers and their students from conversations that centred on the process of dancing, as well as the inclusion of the holistic aspects of space, place, and experience.

While not a comprehensive list,[67] what these examples reveal is the lack of research on how adults, especially those with little training, engage with dance and dancing, and thus, what could be considered transformative learning (within specifically the tenets of the theory). While many of them address movement and somatics as a subject matter, there is little mention of specifically adult experience with dance, or the exploration with the process of

[67] In saying this, it should be noted that when searching for listings of resources on transformative learning and dance, very few could be found. As mentioned above, most articles on the subject were found within the fields of somatic and embodied experience. Although not all listed above, the choice includes those that were most prominently mentioned or considered to be the most relevant.

learning and alteration of past thought processes through dance or dancing. This is where the work of Tsouvala and Magos came the closest in its engagement with the theory. In addition to the above, I also conducted a short survey of literature related to teaching dance to adults, and again was surprised at the lack of resources.[68] Most writing related to dance education fell into areas such as dance therapy (mental and physical), community dance, or dance for senior adults. While a full literature review on this topic is not directly relevant for this research, I decided the limited writing on the subject was worth mentioning, since I am dealing with adult learners.

The research for this thesis is not intended to be a guide for teachers on how to engage adults for dance classes or activities, instead its goal is to contribute to the literature about the why's, how's, the opportunities, the stories of involvement, and claims of having experienced life changes because of dance participation. As there is very little written bringing together dance and transformative learning, all the above-mentioned resources are taken into consideration, whether they align with the types of questions chosen for the examination of the participants' experiences, or not.

3.3.7 Related Research

Research that was found to most closely relate to this project, profiles the process of transformative learning through other artistic approaches, resulting in feelings of empowerment and an altered sense of self. In her investigation of two participatory photography projects that feature homeless women and

[68] This search was within the vein of resources related to the process of teaching of dance to adults on a non-professional level. I do recognise that within the areas of dance ethnography and sociology there are writings about the dance experiences of adults. For example, Buckland 1999, Thomas 1997, Grau 2001, Sklar 2001, David 2014, van Eade 2014 to name only a very few.

children, educationalist Darlene Clover writes about transformative learning as a process of both engagement and empowerment. Each project paired the participant with an artist-educator and together they created photographs and an exhibition that featured their stories and artwork. Through the lens of feminist and transformative learning theories Clover examines, via interviews and moving and still images, the experience of being homeless. She draws insight from the metaphors presented in the photographs, and finds the story behind the story. Most importantly, is the recognition of the transformation of the participants because of engaging in the *process* of photography. She says, '…for the participants, the process of being and becoming artists in their own right was probably the most empowering of all' (Clover 2006: 284). For the individuals profiled in her research, confidence and empowerment transpired as a result of a prolonged situation where new skills were introduced. As they became more confident over time in both their process and product, conversations and opportunities for critical reflection helped them address the other situations that had transpired in their lives. In this way as stated by Tisdale, they could differentiate between past and present knowledge, employing the aspects of transformative learning that, 'alter our very being, our beliefs, and our core sense of self – the core theme by which we live and move and define our being' (Tisdale 2012: 22). For the adult women, the process of 'being and becoming artists' (Clover 2006: 287) certainly prompted this outcome, and was seen by Clover as the most prominent and transformative result. She observes,

> This new skill has instilled a much greater sense of confidence in all of the participants that in turn fosters a type of power comprising agency, skill, and identity. These are among the factors that are

> believed to be vital to learning for transformation as well as for changing relationships with others.
>
> (Clover 2006: 287)

She also references educationalist Kathryn Ecclestone (2004) who states,

> …for learning to be truly transformative, it must challenge, encourage risk taking, and realize new capacities through "one's own recognition and voice".
>
> (Ecclestone 2004:11)

Although the project and artistic medium differ, in her research, Clover uncovers many of the indicators of and towards the process of transformation that were found in the stories of my participants who engage in an activity that challenges past and present norms. It encourages the development of new skills, and allows for empowerment and the opportunity to either find or rediscover one's voice, allowing the possibility of/for transformative learning to occur.

A question often asked from those outside of my research is, '*why dance?'.* What Clover's research suggests is that it is not necessarily the activity that is important; it is process of risk taking, skill building, and the resultant feelings of empowerment and sense of self that come as a result of engagement with any activity. Therefore, the activity that affects this reaction in one person, may not be the one that creates the same result in another person. While I am not entirely convinced that it is as simple as this, my participant Carys made the following comment when considering the above question,

Carys, 28: UK

Maybe you didn't think about all of the other things that you tried, like I've done lots of other activities before…and you probably don't pinpoint it, because otherwise we would be having this discussion about climbing. And

because that didn't bring me the right kind of joy that I was looking for…I didn't know I was looking for until I found it [with dance].

As such, I recognise that transformative learning can come as a result of participation in other activities, but this research attempts to uncover the patterns and similarities in the stories of the participants that reveal the aspects and specificities that further unpack the question of 'why dance?'. Therefore, my aim is to further illuminate, as has already been stated, how, through an engagement with dance and dancing, does a person experience change that is noticeable to both themselves and others, and how has the core sense of self been altered? Secondly, in Western society, it is recognised that dance can invoke distinct personal and social attitudes which may not be present in other art forms. The stories of the participants will also provide commentary on these types of relationships and opinions, as both adolescents and adults, to further the discussion related to the non-professional dancer's connection to dance.

3.4 Contributing Theories: Constructive-development, Flow, Peak Experience

The first half of this chapter concentrated on an overview of transformative learning theory. The following section presents three theories that also contribute to the analysis and discussion: constructive-development, flow, and peak experience. The theories of transformative learning and constructive-development explore the phenomena of experience from the standpoint of human development. Placing it within a realm of constructing meaning and reality, it allows for a more rational viewpoint of understanding to emerge. The inclusion of the theories of flow and peak experience also allow for the

recognition of experiences of multi-levels of change, with some being more impactful than others. Each of the theories will contribute to the exploration of transformative experiences, and will offer contributing perspectives to this line of enquiry.

3.4.1 Constructive-Developmental Theory

Like Mezirow, Kegan also argues that it is the construction and accumulation of experiences, and the meaning attributed to those experiences over the course of time, that serves as the catalysts for development and transformation within a human life (Kegan 1983, 1994). Constructive-development theory is concerned with how, through lived experience, individuals construct and understand reality, and develop that construction into more complex layers of knowledge and meaning. A person's '…developmental capacity affects everything a person is able to think or do' (Berger 2003: np). Like Maslow's pyramid of *Hierarchy of Needs* (1943),[69] Kegan posits that each person must establish distinct dimensions of personal and social knowledge in order to move forward into maturity; he/she cannot simply learn new information, but needs to have an exposure to change in order to take the steps to integrate that information fully into their new body of awareness, and move forward into the next developmental stage. For him, transformation is, '…not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels,

[69] Maslow stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfil the next one, and so on…The earliest and most widespread version of Maslow's (1943) *hierarchy of needs* includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. This five-stage model can be divided into basic (or deficiency) needs (e.g. physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization)…One must satisfy lower level basic needs before progressing on to meet higher level growth needs. Once these needs have been reasonably satisfied, one may be able to reach the highest level called self-actualization (McLeod 2007: np).

but the way he knows – not just what he knows, but the *way* he knows' (Kegan 1994:17). Each change provides new opportunities for meaning making, adding to the depth and complexities of one's ways of knowing as well as their overall worldview. Critical to the creation of systems of meaning, are what Kegan categorises as 'Subject and Object' (ibid: 32). Subject represents the aspects that are imperceptible, held internally, and are the 'unquestioned beliefs…people assume those things as obviously true…they don't question their assumptions' (Berger 2003: np). That which is subject represents embedded belief systems and worldviews that are difficult to alter. Like Mezirow's habits of mind, subject governs reactions and decisions from a place that is usually outside of conscious control. Object is the opposite of subject and represents the external or known elements '…that we can take reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate on' (Kegan 1994:32). Object is flexible and allows for the inclusion of new ideas as well as the expansion or dissolution of prior ideologies. Kegan says, 'We *have* object; we *are* subject' (ibid: 32). It is the transition between each of the developmental orders, through Kegan's understanding of transformation, where the information gained from experience moves from subject to object; creating a system of meaning creation from which an environment is interpreted.

3.4.2 Flow

The process of being in a state of flow is similar to what is described by the participants when they speak about an experience where time slows, everything seems to be in a state of perfection, and the activity engaged is perceived to be effortless. As stated by its originator, psychologist Mihaly

Csikszentmihályi, ‘Flow experiences provide the flashes of intense living against a dull background’ (Csikszentmihályi 1998:31), which is reflective of the realisation of new insight and elevated awareness within this type of experience. Flow is described by psychologist Susan Jackson as, ‘…a state of consciousness where one becomes totally absorbed in what one is doing, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and emotions’ (Csikszentmihályi and Jackson 1999:5). To experience a moment of flow is to be completely involved in the present moment without regard for other people, thoughts, or activities outside of that moment. Csikszentmihályi named this theory after exploring why individuals in certain professions (arts, sports, musicians, surgeons) became engrossed in their work, to the point of neglecting the need for food, water, or socialization. He further applied it to the exploration of extraordinary experience or those which exist or are created outside of the realm of what is considered ordinary (Csikszentmihályi 2002:4). Contesting the notion of Cartesian duality, Csikszentmihályi argues that flow takes place when one comes to a place where mind and body are harmonious. He refers to this as the merging of action and awareness where, ‘Instead of the mind looking at the body from the outside…the mind and body fuse into one’ (Csikszentmihályi and Jackson 1999:19). It is a coordinated union that allows for the feelings of one-ness or euphoria that once experienced, continues to attract, with possibility of such an occurrence happening on a regular basis.

Some of the participants report these feelings of elation when first encountering dance (discussed further in Chapter four), and refer to their continued participation as an addiction or obsession. Other studies by Vallerand et. al (2003, 2011) question the nature of flow when engaging in

activities that fall into the categories of either being obsessive or harmonious. They posit that it is only when there is a harmonious and positive connection to one's passion, that allows the experience of flow occur. If the activity is engaged in from a state of obsession, the needs for control are too great to induce a flow reaction. Csikszentmihályi negates this notion, referring to the types of activities that induce such a state as autotelic, or 'one that we choose to do for its own sake, that once experienced, it is sought after again and again…' (Csikszentmihályi and Jackson 1999:30). They are not restricted to any "type" of enterprise (work or leisure), or emotional or psychological state, but are more dependent on when awareness and opportunity merge to produce what is considered to be an 'optimal experience'. This is described as,

> Concern for the self disappears when one is in flow, as do worries or negative thoughts. There is simply no attention left over to worry about the things in everyday life we usually spend so much time dwelling on. Flow frees the individual from self-concern and self-doubt. Loss of self-consciousness is an empowering characteristic: after the flow experience, the perception of self is stronger and more positive… Not worrying about oneself frees the self to become totally involved in the activity.
>
> (Csikszentmihályi and Jackson 1999:8)

This statement is in line with the some of the most prominent accounts from the participants when describing the reasons they returned to dancing over and over again; the feeling of being able to release their mind and body from the worries and thoughts associated with their everyday lives. This is especially applicable to those whose dance practice was in response to a personal crisis. Although perhaps not consciously searching for a release from these thoughts and feelings, dancing provided the outlet through which they

could transcend, and eventually transform, their experience. As stated by Delia when describing her flow induced moments while dancing,

Delia, 59: USA

It's always been that, a deeper level that is right there in front of you... Maybe it's just a combination of this transcendence that happens when you're in those moments. Who knows? I don't know. But I know that I haven't turned back since then.

In this sense, the experiences of flow contribute to the process of transformative learning in that they provide tangible evidence of an occurrence of change that can be described in great detail. As is seen in the stories of the participants, it was this internal recognition of change, and the eventual external recognition on the part of others, that served to completely manifest the experience of transformation. I would argue that without passing through various moments of being in flow, many of the participants would not have continued with dance in their lives.

3.4.3 Peak Experience

Peak experience is similar to flow in that it can be described as a contained or repetitive moment of extreme emotion or feeling of euphoria, but is seen by Csikszentmihályi to be different because flow experiences are possible in both ordinary and extraordinary experiences. For Maslow,

> …a generalisation for the best moments of the human being, for the happiest moments in life, for experiences of ecstasy, rapture, bliss, of the greatest joy… The peak experience is felt as a self-validating, self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it…Peak-experience can make life worthwhile by their occasional occurrence. They give meaning to life itself.
>
> (Maslow 1964: 101)

Believing that this type of 'mountain top' (Maslow 1964) experience can be achieved through a variety of expressions, Maslow sought to explore what he considered to be the best and highest reaches of the human experience and identity. A peak experience is something that can potentially come about in the lives of all types of people, whether they reached the stage of self-actualisation or not (Maslow 1962).[70] He says,

> …all or almost all people have or can have peak experiences, and all kinds of constitutional types have peak experiences, but…the situation or trigger which set these…can be quite different.
>
> (Maslow 1964: 29)

Triggers for a peak experience come from a multitude of sources ranging from the ordinary to the extraordinary, with the happenings of robust peak experiences often attributed to moments related to aesthetic experience (Maslow 1968). Maslow comments,

> I may add even, that when I was talking about music as a path to peak experience, I included dancing. For me, they have already melded together… The love for the body, awareness of the body, and a reverence for the body-that kind of thing that gets mixed in there-these are clearly good paths to peak experiences.
>
> (Maslow 1968:167)

Other characteristics include descriptions of 'rapture, or great joy, moments of transcendence, moments when an individual feels at his or her very best –

strong, whole, and in control' (Hodges and Sebald 2011: 263). Whatever the source of the trigger, each experience takes shape as something that is intrinsic or individualised in nature. Although others might be present and the words to describe such a moment may be similar, the feelings of ecstasy or joy are intrinsic to the person to whom the peak experience is happening. A guiding principle of a peak experience is in an individualised experience; the lasting effects also being evaluated on an individual basis. For each person, a peak encounter is coming to that experience with their own personal triggers and place within the hierarchical structure of needs.

Maslow also addresses the dichotomy of internal experience versus external validation by qualifying that each peak experience needs to be addressed, integrated, and examined in a manner that validates the purely subjective experience felt by the individual. Although less researched by him, there are differing reports as to the lasting aftereffects of a peak experience. In his text, *Towards a Psychology of Being* (1968) he maintains that the average experience and agreement on the part of his subjects was that there was some sort of lasting effect (Maslow 1968:110). Thus, a formation of possible after or conversion effect was set forth and includes such ideas as; a healthy view of himself, others, and their relationship to the world, greater creativity and expressive potential, an imprint of the experience that makes one want to repeat it, and an outlook on life that is more positive, validating, and meaningful (ibid:110).

> People during and after peak-experience characteristically feel lucky, fortunate, graced… A common consequence is a feeling a feeling of gratitude, in religious persons to their God, in others to Fate, to Nature, to people, to the past, to the world, to everything and anything that helped to make this wonder possible.

(Maslow 1968: 124)

This feeling is evident in the stories of the participants, and was often given as a reason for answering my request for interviews. There was within them a sense of responsibility to share, and through the telling of their story, give credence to all that they have experienced. This relates to Mezirow's notion of reflection and dialogue, a topic that will feature in the later discussion.

This chapter introduced the primary frames of interpretation that have been used to examine the stories shared by the participants. What each has in common is that through the examination of experience, patterns of learning and transformation will surface to provide greater depths of meaning. The use of these theories will provide a better understanding of the process of movement from former experiences and belief systems, to new learning and revelations. Flow and peak experience allow for a closer examination of those occurrences that produce moments of profound joy, elation, and feelings that an extreme alteration has transpired. This allows for continued exploration and questioning throughout the thesis, and as such, continued connections are made in Chapters four to six.

As stated in the introduction, the thesis is divided into two sections with the first three chapters serving as introductory material to the project, participants, methods, and theoretical frames. The second section begins with a short interlude in which the development of themes and sub-themes for Chapters four, five, and six are developed, before moving forward into further discussions about the data and the discoveries related to the development and alteration of systems of belief in regards to dance and dancing.

Interlude – Diagramming the Data

This interlude between parts one and two is intended to be a transition from the introductory chapters, to those chapters where the data and voices of the participants are more present. It bridges the two sections by presenting a brief explanation of the thematic lenses and frames used to determine the focus of the following three chapters.

ii.i Examining the Stories

A challenge when examining the data, was paring down the stories into workable patterns and themes shared amongst the group. The difficulty being that no story, as in life, is the same, with each possessing qualities that are unique to each participant's experience. Keeping in mind the research goals associated with exploring systems of belief and transformative experience, a series of devices were established to examine the stories from a perspective related to the larger patterns present, while remaining true to the unique elements found in each of them. The first of these was presented in Chapter two, and was one of three systems used for identifying the patterns and themes across the participant group. Although less formal than the thematic methods presented in Chapter three, the approaches are similar in their goals of being organisational tools as well as positional generators. Consequently, the research could be contemplated from a variety of angles representing the participant's voices from sites relevant to their experience. Presented in this interlude are two further systems, which are divided into two parts. Included are a diagrammatical outline and a multi-branched frame, each of which was

developed concurrently as the data was examined and hypotheses were made.

ii.ii Constructing a 'Constellation of Belief'

Fuller-Snyder advocates for the creation of diagrammatical representations when examining dance events underlying the importance of, that '…which could be described visually rather than verbally, which could reveal the total concept through a full display of micro-macro patternings' (Fuller-Snyder 1989: 3). She suggests that this type of 'graphic stepping-stone' (ibid) is useful when creating an analytical framework to gain a more complete understanding of the structural systems. When considering such tools, I took inspiration from Mezirow's presentation of a 'constellation of belief' (1990, 2000). He describes this as a form of amorphous container of elements such as attitudes, influences, and emotions that shape meaning schemes and perspectives, which work together as the building blocks to form a larger world view. Therefore, the image that emerged for me is a central topic from which flows many independent strands. I began the process by extracting the important words and phrases linked to the participant's descriptions of dance events, and placed them into the constellation-like formation that helped shape the thinking around the data. A colleague mentioned that the process of writing about the data was the telling of 'my story about their stories', and what these diagrams facilitated are an alternative means of data distribution which help to further clarify both the individual and combined voices of the group. The analysis of Marco's adolescent dance experience serves as an illustration of this thinking.

Marco, 67: UK

Marco was born in 1948 and grew up post WWII in what he referred to as, *'an industrial town in the North of England*'. He indicated several times in the interview that he attended an all boy's school, which influenced him greatly throughout the course of his life. He also spoke about a strict upbringing and intimated that his father had stringent ideas about proper behaviour and lifestyles, as for example in gender representation. The learning of country dances at primary school where boys and girls occupied their gender defined roles was described as his earliest memory of dance,[71] but it was his second memory of an experience in adolescence that played an influential role in his future associations. He says,

I had a rather dramatic experience with dance when I was 13 years old, I went to a dancehall one evening, and I was pretty gauche with girls - I was going to a boy school at the time, and my friend was pretty gauche as well. We couldn't get girls to dance with [us], but we felt the music you know and we just wanted to dance…So pretty soon… [we] *just got on the dance floor…The doorman, the bouncer came, and in a very humiliating way… he asked us to leave the dance floor…In a very humiliating way, he said to us 'you look like a couple of Nancies'. And it was actually quite traumatic actually. There we were, a couple of boys dancing together and ignoring the rules that culture dictated.*

Immediately before relaying this memory, he recalled a time where, as an adult, in his Dances of Universal Peace group, there happened to be a few instances where only men were present to dance together. He says,

[71] Although Marco states that he went to all boy's school in his adolescent experience, I am assuming that the mention of learning country dances was at a co-educational primary school.

It was a little bit challenging because of my background, which was kind of a post war baby boomer kind of culture, men and women on separate pathways and so on. And so holding hands and dancing in the circle was a little bit of a challenge. But I kind of overcame that challenge. And one day I went along and there was just four of us - four men. (Nervous laugh) Four men dancing together from my background, it was quite the dubious activity. And I remember thinking, 'Oh my! What if my father could see me now, what would he be thinking!'…Because my background was all about - you couldn't dance with a partner unless it was a woman.

The two latter memories provided the most useful information about his experiences when dancing as an adolescent. Using key words and phrases, a diagram was created (See figure one).[72]

[72] Each of the colours represents a different theme or event. For example, the gold is inclusive of Marco's childhood history, the purple his mention of issues with men dancing, and the green his traumatic childhood encounter at a school dance.

Figure one

What this ‘constellation’ illustrates are the words, phrases, and concepts extracted from the portions of the transcript. The right side relates to comments about place, time-period, and immediate personal and social influences. The left side highlights specific words used by Marco to describe the memory of the school dance. Although the excerpts are short, there was enough information revealed to create inferences about the development of Marco’s adolescent association to dance, and the development of the

resulting system of belief. After examining Marco's story, I chose to highlight the following observations within my field notes:

Field Notes for Marco – 23 April, 2015

Marco indicated that he was raised in a post-industrial Northern UK city, post WWII. His mention of attending a boy's school, his father's ideas about men dancing, as well as the comments about the roles of men and women indicated that he might have had an upbringing that was not only conservative, but where specific gender roles were reinforced. This latter concept was a prevalent theme throughout the interview, which was further established when he spoke about 'what his father might think' if he saw him dancing with men, as well as in his difficult encounter as a teenager at the school dance event. The language used to describe this experience indicated not only feelings of shame and trauma, but a possible pre-existing or underlying conceptual understanding that what he and his friend were doing by dancing together might go against accepted social norms. Although I do not know Marco well enough to assess his opinion of homosexuality, there were enough mentions of the sort above that helped me decipher a form of discomfort that had deeper roots than just men dancing together. My hypothesis therefore about his adolescent beliefs regarding dance is the message that "men don't dance", which resulted in an early affiliation to dance that was grounded in fear based on personally and socially constructed markers.

The creation of a physical diagram which highlighted the language used to describe the dance events in the transcripts, provided opportunities for comparison between adolescent and adult experiences. This was extremely

helpful when searching for the key that might unlock or alter the former belief system regarding dance and dancing. Examining further Marco's statement, Figure two presents a diagram based upon his adult experiences:

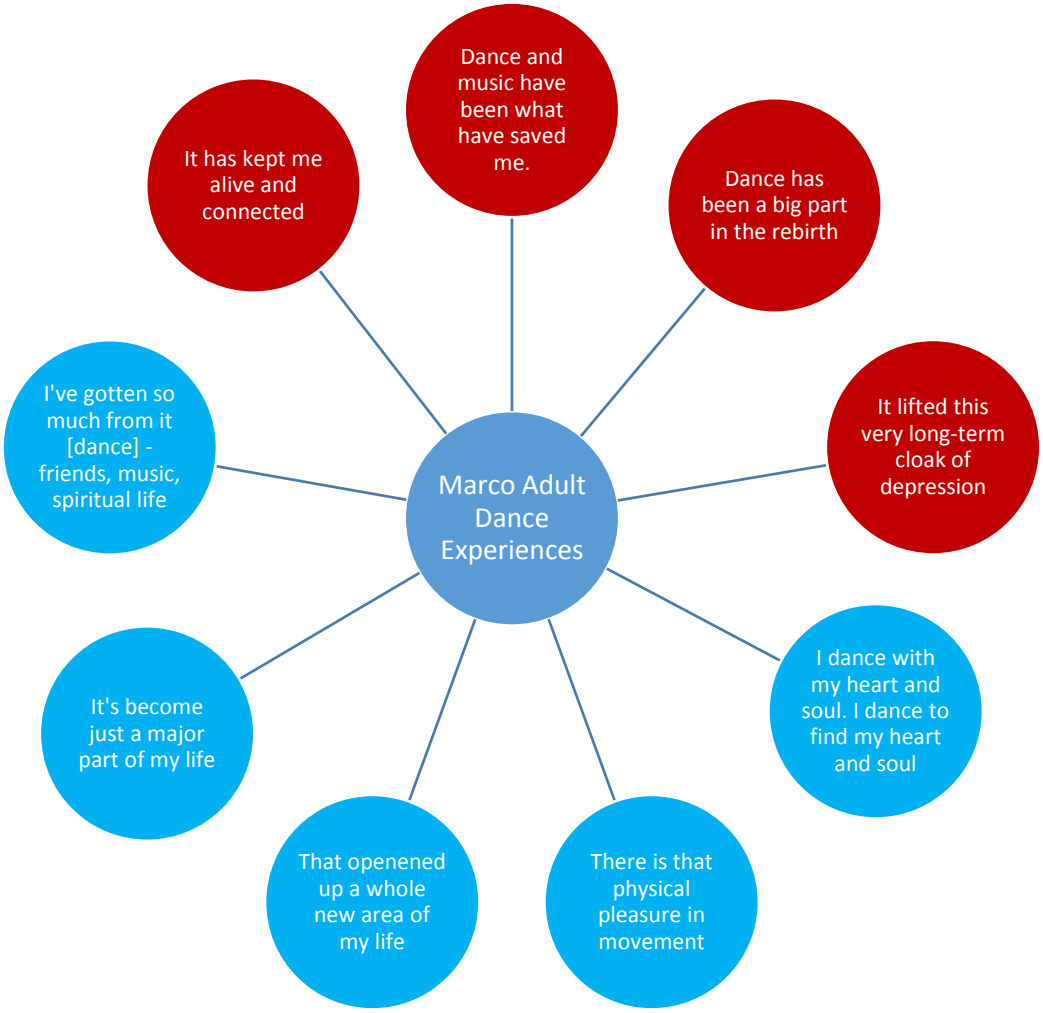

Figure Two[73]

Excerpts were again extracted from the overall text to highlight the verbal expressions related to his adult experiences of dance. What is immediately noticeable is the change in the use of language; what was described as

[73] In this diagram the blue circles signifies the positive affirmations or contributions. The red circles refer to language where dance was attributed to being part of an active process of change.

'humiliating' in his adolescent description, now reflects more positive and meaningful affirmations. Such phrases as '*alive and connected', 'physical pleasure'* and even a claim of dance as a life saver and contributor to a process of *'rebirth'* are present. Again, my informal observations from my field notes:

Many of Marco's adult affirmations stand in opposition to those expressed about his childhood experiences. A self-described spiritual explorer, he discovered dance as an adult because of what he refers to as a 'mystical meeting' with an acquaintance after a prayer service. This connection then led to an invitation to join a Dances of Universal Peace community where his past beliefs about dance, gender roles, and men dancing together were continually challenged. The multiple mentions of this topic in the stories of his adult experiences led me to surmise that this personal conflict has not been completely overcome.

He later expanded his dance exploration further into 5Rhythms and shamanic forms of trance dance and described his movement based spiritual "journeys" in great detail. Through each of these dance forms there took place what Marco considers to be differing forms of healing to his life and past difficulties, and it is his opinion that dancing healed his major depression. He even gives credits to dance as a contributor to saving his life, although it is unclear if he is referring to this literally or metaphorically. Marco appears to be in the midst of experiencing major re-evaluative life changes or 'disorienting dilemmas' as Mezirow states, and the types of dance genres encountered and experienced were such that they served the purpose needed at that moment. They already contained a directive that initiated the type of community and practice Marco

was searching for, and so met his conscious and unconscious therapeutic needs. At the time of the interview, Marco had begun to move somewhat away from his originally chosen dance practices, preferring instead to practice yoga and attend the occasional DUP or 5Rhythms dance event. He has also begun going to country line dancing and says that he is learning to love to dance *'just for the fun of it'.*

Fuller Snyder contends, 'Always being aware of the whole seems critically important, for the wholeness is the context' (Fuller Snyder 1989: 3). These types of diagrams were very useful tools for examining key portions of each story. Through the use of verbal markers, they provide an efficient way to identify themes both within and across the group as a whole. Although it could be argued that the choice of excerpts presents a biased perspective based on my interpretation of the data, at the forefront was always the importance of remaining true to the intentions of the participants, as well as the goals of the research.

ii.iii Considering Events

The diagrams present small passages from a variety of events. Each story possesses multiple events that include dance and dancing, which are linked together to form a larger experience. The creation of such a system served a dual purpose of extracting information and creating critical through-lines. By examining the key words and phrases, what emerged was patterns of both language and experiences that overlapped. Fuller Snyder states about such a diagrammatical approach that,

> It seems to me that an approach of this kind pulls together some of the otherwise overwhelming ideas that seem inherent in an event, and gives perspective to dance in relationship to that macro event.
>
> (Fuller Snyder 1998:3)

She created the divisions of her multi-levelled framework by identifying the aspects related to person, place, space, and costumes, as observed when attending dance events. As this research is dependent upon the use of language, the distinguishable parts were based upon language found in the descriptions of childhood, adolescent, and adult experiences. In this sense a dance event takes on a different context as it is a description by the individual participant about their experience with dancing, rather than a physically observable occasion.

Anthropologist Jane Cowan speaks about both her observations and definitions of dance events and dance narratives in her research about the Sohoian[74] community in Northern Greece. Although she could observe the physically performed dance events, she also drew upon narratives about dance experiences and events from the villagers. She concluded that 'Language is used to construct meanings about dance in many ways' (Cowan 1990: 26), and should be used in conjunction with other types of observations; it too, serves as a small part of the larger whole. When discussing dance events, Cowan refers to them in two ways that are useful when contemplating the narrated expressions. The first represents them as a 'site, both physical and conceptual' (ibid: 4), and the second is what she describes as 'frames within frames' (ibid: 21). The former is the acknowledgement of not only the

[74] A pseudonym

actual physical participation in a dance event, but also the recognition of it as a living entity retained within the memory of both the physical body and consciousness of the participant. Although as a researcher, I am reliant upon the participant's description, for them it resides in an embedded location of knowledge from which meaning is constructed and drawn upon. The latter description of 'frames within frames' aids in the compartmentalisation of the dance events within the life experiences as a whole. Each encounter with dance, in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, constitutes a form of dance related moment which can be framed or re-framed based on contextual circumstances, resulting in perceptions that form the basis for personal worldviews in regards to dance.

Keeping this in mind, the challenge is to determine what types of remembered experiences constituted such an event, and how to divide them into manageable categories. As referred to in Chapter three, and in the diagrams above, these divisions were constructed firstly into a thematic chart (see appendix G) which drew on larger categories of information both individual and across the participant group, to begin to produce identifiable patterns. Secondly came the process of highlighting precise words and phrases. The combination of the two worked together in the hope of revealing Chase's description of 'submerged stories' (Chase 2004: 291). For example, the use of words or phrases related to freedom (*'I feel free', 'Dancing equals freedom'*, etc.) stood out because of the creation of this system. This, and other such results, prompted further questioning around the topics raised by the repeated words, thus aiding in the analytical process. The use of an electronic system to such as Nvivo for data analysis was originally a part of the research plan.

But after completing the diagrammatical evaluation, however, I decided that the key word information provided by Nvivo had already been produced. As such, there emerged a series of lenses through which the events and stories can be viewed. They are referred to as such because they contribute broad scenarios that help to shape how the information is disseminated, and serve as sub-sections or headings under which the data are categorised.

ii.iv Multi-Branched Frame

Once again, the inspiration for the multi-branched frame initially came from Fuller-Snyder's work profiling the differing levels of the dance event (1989). As mentioned earlier, she proposed seven levels ranging from the material (space, costumes) to the individual (dancer as a part of the group, inner and outer selves), and includes aspects from the macro to the micro. The framework in this research is much less detailed than Fuller-Snyder's, but takes into consideration the broader positions being addressed, and uses them to break down the stories into more discernible pieces. After examining the data from the diagrams, I created larger frames or lenses that were representative of the thematic branches. The responses related to the dance events and experiences as both children, adolescents, and adults produced a mixture of information. The discourse showed that there are not only a wide variety of opinions and attitudes to dance, but the experiences that produced them also fall across a large spectrum. Five topical areas emerged that not only encompassed the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data, but also provided categories that allowed, as stated by Chase, for examining the information from the viewpoint of the 'general and the particular' (Chase 1995: 20). Although each is autonomous, there is a constant cause and effect

overlap that continually binds them together. Therefore, for the best interests of investigating the development and alteration of systems of belief, the largest three of the frames encounter, relationships, and perception/perspectives are presented as global themes, with value, and risk acting as interwoven sub-themes. This is not an indicator of lesser importance, but simply an efficient necessity given the structure and goals of the thesis.

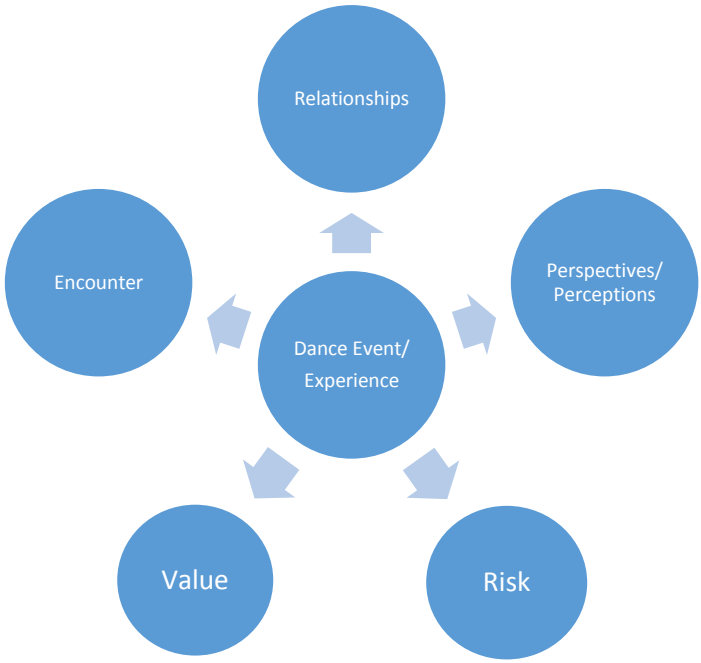

Figure 3

Each circle is representational of the most supportive frames for the analysis of the participant data. While some aspects parallel those found in the basic tenets of transformative learning, the structure was loosely created before

choosing the theory as a theoretical frame.[75] Specifically, its links to the process of adult learning and the examination of the alteration of belief systems, as well as the flexibility with which authors other than Mezirow, both utilised and broadened the theory. Of greatest influence were the writings of Edward Taylor (1998, 2000, 2012, 2013), Patricia Cranton (2006), and Robert Kegan (1994, 2009), M. Carolyn Clark (1993, 2012) and John M. Dirkx (1997, 2000). These writers represent what Taylor and Cranton (2012) refer to as 'second wave' transformative learning in that their work is critical of, and expands upon, the intentions laid out in the theory's original manifestation. As mentioned above, it is recognised that there are constant overlaps in both form and function between the themes and sub-themes; as the influence of one area on another is a part of the natural fluidity of human experience. But each also contains distinct traits through which the material can be viewed.

This interlude serves as a bridge between the first and second sections of the thesis. It introduces the process of data extraction and organisation through the process of the development of a diagrammatical constellation. Marco's story is a demonstration of the key verbal words and phrases that were used to disseminate common themes. These developed into larger overarching topics that form the foundations for the next three chapters. Chapter four addresses the concept of encounters and looks at how unplanned visual, verbal, or physical meetings influenced opinions and belief systems about dance and dancing. Chapter five extends this enquiry by considering how the

[75] As stated in the introduction, my original primary theoretical frame was based upon Allegra Fuller Snyder's multiple levelled framework of examining a dance event. It was decided half-way through the research process that an alternative theory was needed and it was at this time that transformative learning theory was chosen. The original attraction to the theory was its perspective on the alteration of adult belief systems, but the specific aspects that were like what it is I considered my primary themes were unknown at that time.

encounters developed into differing forms of relationships. Chapter six addresses the themes of perspectives and perceptions and considers notions of identity as related to the hierarchical structures of amateur and professional dance and dancers.

Chapter Four - Encounter

4.1 Encounter

I use the concept of encounter as the catalyst through which the participants come into contact with dance and dancing. That is, there was a moment of meeting, either by choice or by chance, which resulted in a new awareness. Therefore, an encounter refers to a meeting or a confrontation, often seemingly unexpected that brings to light a new perception or understanding. Referred to in Chapter one, arts educator Peter London defines an encounter as being a moment when,

> Something new has to enter your prevailing life and interrupt that life in some fashion and degree in order to break through the momentum of your ordinary life.[76]

Taking this into account, from the interviews I realised that the concept of encounter took on two different, but equally important roles when determining the formation of belief systems about dance. The first involved an actual physical meeting or engagement with dance and dancing, and the second, a non-physical influence such as a verbal exchange, peer pressure, or other form of social interaction. Both are instrumental in the production of ideas, opinions, and belief systems about dance and dancing that were influenced based upon the differing types experienced, many from a young age. Therefore, encounters are divided into three categories – verbal, physical, and social. Generally, it was a combined scenario that produced a point of view, either positive or negative, that extended well into adulthood. Although not the

[76] Personal Correspondence, October 2013

case for each participant, for those who spoke about an encounter in adolescence, there were clear dividing lines associated with the way dance interactions were incorporated into their lives. The next section will present some examples of types of encounters as spoken about in both childhood and adult experiences.

4.2 Childhood/Adolescent Encounters

A goal of the research was to speak with individuals who claimed to have little or no experience with dance in childhood and adolescence. Although most of the participants agreed with this claim at the time they accepted to be interviewed, what was revealed was that everyone had had some sort of interaction with dance and dancing. What is important to note, and is clarified here and further in Chapter five, are the levels of importance placed on, or discounted by these types of encounters and memories. Even though dance experiences were a part of their lives in some way, the integral difference is the depth of meaning and significance it now holds in their adult lives.

The most often recalled memory with dance and dancing from childhood, from both male and female participants, was at school as a part of physical education class. It was spoken about with fairly neutral observations from both genders, and the experience carried a balanced commentary that did not reveal a great deal of difference from either group.

Motoko, 40: USA/Japan

Occasionally, of course, in school, [in] *a gym class, we sometimes did* [dance]*, but it's not really something I chose to do.*

Cedric, 54: Ireland/UK

I was exposed to Irish dancing at school, but that was the third dollop of Irish history. And besides, it was taught by people who might have had another agenda, and that didn't sit right with me at that time. Although I loved the music, and I loved the stories and the songs and all that. But there was something else at that time that wasn't right, and I didn't feel a part of anything then. Whereas being in dance now, I feel a part of something, and I felt that straightaway as soon as I started.

In her study of adolescent boys and girls[77] and their attitudes about dance as presented in school settings, educational psychologist Patricia Sanderson (2000) found, that for most it was an experience that ranked as being of lesser importance when measuring either a positive or negative experience. This type of social dance, regarded by the students in her study as lower on the scale of performance based activities, held an almost ritualistic or rite of passage perspective[78] that differed from ballet or contemporary dance. It also usually placed boys and girls in traditionally gendered partner positions further extending the notion of social acceptability. The comments from the participants in my research echoed these findings, with their attitudes reflecting their participation as either an introductory or a "throw away" memory with dance. As stated by Laura,

Laura, 63: UK

Well I didn't dance as a child. I would have loved dancing lessons but I didn't have the opportunity. At school we didn't really have dance. We maybe had one or two terms of something called creative dance or something like that…

[77] The boys and girls interviewed for this study were between the ages of eleven and sixteen years old.
[78] Ritualistic or rite of passage referring to the commonplace that it held within the school curriculum. There was an expectation on the part of the participants that they would participate in social dance at school every year.

Laura's comment about not dancing, then quickly followed by a reference to dance activities at school was a common scenario. So much so that it was often discounted or dismissed, and undervalued, especially as it was mandatory and conducted within a physical education setting.

Other childhood remembrances about dance and dancing reflected stereotypical gender roles. This featured prominently for the female participants as a longing or admiration for ballet dancers, and the message that "boys don't dance" for the males. This division is significant in early dance experience because it reveals the later reversal of both habits of mind and points of view as adults as proposed in transformative learning theory - especially for those who had to overcome negative association. For several of the participants, the messages they received about dance included social stereotypes that instilled a form of chorophobia, or fear of dancing. As mentioned above, these experiences stem from both physical engagement or non-physical encounters, each of which carries the possibility of a psychological impact.

For the male participants, the most common experience of dancing as a child or adolescent was in situations where the impetus was to attract members of the opposite sex. School dances, parties, or ballroom dance classes were all mentioned.

Geoffrey, 70: UK

…there was a jazz band that had a number of young women who used to dance with it, and I used to go and dance with them.

Taylor, 75: UK

As a teenager I danced a bit of ballroom and to jive as we used to call it. I was around when Bill Haley's Comets came into vogue. 'Rock Around the Clock'…And we used to jive to traditional jazz…So I did a bit of that. So I flirted with it…that was when I was about seventeen or sixteen…and then didn't do anything for years and years and years…It's what people did; people of my generation, people at school. And we met girls that way…of course, that was a significant part of it. And a lot of us used to sit around, eyeing up the girls and not dancing with them…

As teenagers, two of the male participants attended military academies where, as a part of their officer training programme, they became skilled in the regional traditional dances of their regiments. Neither enjoyed the experience and cited it as a reason for disliking dance as a social activity.

Dean, 60: UK

When I was 18 I had to do ballroom and Latin dance training during my officer training at the Royal Air Force…and that was in the mid-70s. And it wasn't the thing to do in those days, it was all about disco. So, it put me off dancing.

Calvin, 79: UK

In the army, I went into the Highland regiment – the Argyles… You had to be able to dance properly, certain things, in case you went to a ball in uniform, and therefore be distinguished as a particular regiment [by the dances performed]…*That was my only formal training with dance, and I didn't take to it very much.*

Both Marco and Daniel expressed an interest in dancing as children, but met people whose comments dissuaded them from participating. Each of them was met with the stereotypical assumption that if you were male and interested in engaging with dance, then you must be homosexual.[79] For Ralph, who later in life did identify as gay, the interaction with the male

[79] Their stories are discussed in greater detail later in the thesis.

members of his family reinforced what was already brewing as a source of confusion in his life. Around seven years old, he began taking ballet lessons and performed as a clown in a local production of *The Nutcracker*. He very much enjoyed the experience until he showed a newspaper clipping to his family and the male members made comments that were derogatory, embarrassing, and related to male dancers being homosexual.

Ralph, 25: USA

I'll never forget passing around that photo to my family, I think I still have it, and by and large, every single man in my family was like, 'what the hell are you doing and why?'…especially my father...it was like 'what is my boy doing in a pink and purple outfit, dancing as a clown on a stage?' And that was kind of the beginning and ending of my [childhood] *dance career... It was a really weird experience to receive that. And I started playing heavily soccer, basketball, baseball...so I kind of took a shift – completely.*

The result of this negative verbal encounter was the choice to stop taking ballet classes, even though for him, the physical experience itself had been positive. As seen in his response, the resultant shift was from ballet dancing to sports, which he later reiterated was an activity which was much more acceptable in the eyes of his male family members. For Ralph, it was a direct link to the socially influenced commentary from an intimate source that determined his opinion of dance.

For many of the female participants there was an element of longing or fantasy related to dance and dancers. Celine referred to it as her '*ballet dream*'. Veronica and Rebecca also mentioned feelings of admiration for dancers, but for reasons personal or financial, they were not able to participate in dance classes as children.

Rebecca, 30: UK

Dancing…yeah, I've always really admired dancers. Now when I watch it, it's just like 'Ah yes'…Yeah, so from a very young age I wanted to do that.

Veronica, 37: Poland/UK

Growing up in Poland, I moved to the coast with my mother. I remember saying, 'Oh! I want to start piano lessons! I want to start ballet lessons!'. But you know you're a kid, the kind of ballroom dancing, I don't even think I knew it existed to be honest. It's something that over the years, when coming over to England, it suddenly was something that I was exposed to now and again, but not in any great detail if I'm honest. Probably movies more than anything else. And I thought, 'Oh that's interesting. I wonder if you could do that?'. And for years and years and years I thought about it and it just kind of didn't happen.

Delia also spoke about taking ballet as a young child, but having to leave her lessons because of the needs of her other siblings.

Delia, 59: USA

I did dance when I was a four-year-old. I studied ballet and tap. Right before my first recital I broke my arm, my elbow. And it's deformed, to this day, because of that. But I could not perform in that recital, and I was very [upset] *about that. I had a cast-arm for months and months. And my mother never allowed me to go back to dancing.*

My mother had no car. And when I was six years old, there were five children. So, when I was four years old, I already had three younger siblings; my mother couldn't drag us all over every week…

I became a closet-dancer. I did what the dancers did on [the] *Jackie Gleason* [show].[80] *Where the girls would lift their legs up and become flowers. I just was always attracted to that. But I couldn't take dance anymore.*

As these participants grew up, the fantasy related to dancing faded and was overtaken by other activities. Now adults, each of them found their preferred

[80] Jackie Gleason was an American film and television actor. He had a variety of television shows including *The Jackie Gleason Show*, and *The Honeymooners*. The former was a variety style programme that ran on and off from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s, and an often-included act was the *June Taylor Dancers,* who performed elaborate dance routines.

form of dance through circumstances that were unexpected, and expressed a great deal of surprise at the large role that it currently plays in their lives. When questioned about their early influence or longing to dance, the response was always one where it was felt there was no connection between their early desire or admiration for dance, and the later participation in it. The reason given was that the style of dance that they admired as a child was different than the one they had chosen to do as an adult. As children, they mostly admired ballet dancers, especially the women in the tutu, tiara and pointe shoes.[81] As adults, none of them chose ballet, and when questioned, mentioned that they felt they were either too old, did not possess the correct body type, or had not ever considered it once they became engaged in their current dance form.

The interviews confirmed that for those who had a positive experience with dance and dancing, there often remained a memory that, once restored, rekindled earlier affirmative or sentimental feelings or opinions. For most, these had been long forgotten, and once recollected, instigated a renewed interest. For example, as a child, in a local church pageant, Calvin portrayed the Biblical character of David, who in the story is portrayed as dancing before the Lord.[82] Although he did not show any interest in dance again until he was a young adult, he cites the memory of how he felt, and how he was perceived

[81] Celine also mentioned admiring other styles of dance that she saw being performed in military shows, but ballet was the form of dance that she most fantasized about participating in. She later learned ballroom and swing dance and participates currently in those forms.

[82] 2 Samuel 6:14 (King James Version) 'And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod'.

and accepted by his peers as a reason for returning to dance when the opportunity presented itself.

Calvin, 69: UK

I remember that [that experience] made a big impression on me…I was living with a Vicar and his family at the time because my mother had tuberculosis. I was quite shy, but my dancing that role made me an included part of a group… I remembered that wonderful feeling of moving, and it stayed with me for all those years…When I returned to dancing in my 60's, that same feeling was still there.

This sentiment was echoed by both Lucy and Sharon who participated in dance as adolescents, but abandoned it when other priorities intervened. For Lucy, it was her entrance into religious life, and for Sharon, marriage and children, both of which took priority over dancing.

Lucy, 69: UK

Dance left my life because it was simply outside of the religious life.

Sharon, 46: UK

So I probably danced for about five to seven years before I had children, then stopped, then was asked to get involved with liturgical dance…basically I'm the wrong shape to be a dancer… when you're five foot one, and with a big body and little legs, I am not, I will never be, could never be, a professional dancer.

On the most part, the participants who spoke about positive childhood dance experiences mentioned that dancing was an enjoyable activity in their life, but was not one that held a compelling amount of deeply held feelings or memories. Kade, Mallory, and Rebecca all spoke about taking dance lessons as children, but it was in a manner that seemed incidental or de rigueur – it was simply an integrated element of their childhood.

Rebecca, 30: UK

I remember one group – one amateur group that I was involved in, and it was a very short period of time. Very short, and I was about 9 or 10, and that was it.

Kade, 53: USA/UK

As I child, I lived in New York City and was sent to the ubiquitous tap and jazz and ballet classes. I didn't like ballet at all! There was a mean Russian lady with a cane yelling at me, and I had panic attacks…at eight years old. 'I don't want to go to that class!' So, I stopped that. I liked tap, I liked jazz, but realised somewhere along the way that I was not going to be the level of a Broadway dancer, and I didn't want to work in that way. So, I dropped dance and went into theatre and acting.

Mallory, 51: Netherlands/UK

I started ballroom dancing as a teenager and everyone in the Netherlands does more or less…You are sort of fifteen and you go to ballroom classes and stuff like that. I really loved it, but never really found a partner who really wanted to do it with me, so that ended my ballroom dancing.

Finally, there were many participants who maintained that they had no experience with dance as a child or adolescent. As stated above, when first pursuing this research topic, it was the people who made this claim that were of greatest interest to me. While I discovered that this was not completely a true statement for any of the participants, there were some for whom it was more a reality than for others. This was most often related to familial, social, or cultural affiliations (discussed further in Chapter five), or as a result of academic or other athletic pursuits.

Carys, 28: UK

Dancing at that time, absolutely not…Maybe a little bit. But it's not really something that even really sticks out in my mind. I think we had this dance teacher, and I was like 'ugh, this is ridiculous'. And, it's not something that… I mean, maybe I went to ballet or something when I was five, or like four or five. I can't really remember…not voluntary.

Cathy, 40: Spain/UK

It was not a part at all. It was no part at all. I mean I had a lot of activities after school, but no dance…I attended concerts or the theatre, and the cinema, but no dance performances.

Darren, 46: USA

No dance at all. I was a Navy guy. I was a Teamster for UPS - I was a Teamster guy. I was watchin' football and drinkin' beer with my buddies kind of guy. Dance was absolutely the furthest thing that anybody was going to think that I was going to do.

For those participants who resided outside of the United States or United Kingdom as children, or were raised in a family whose cultural background was different from the country where they were being raised, their childhood and adolescent experiences with dance differed from those of the other participants.[83] All but Mallory mentioned that dance was not something that was encouraged either in their households or within their immediate culture.[84] Guang mentioned that as a first generation American, his parents wanted him to fit in and therefore his activities centred on excelling in academics as well as a wide variety of sports, with little or no exposure to the arts. Although Motoko stated that dancing was an occasional activity in gym class, it was not encouraged from her family, and dance music and television such as MTV were not a part of the mainstream in Japan until she was too old to engage with that part of culture. There also were not any other popular shows or examples that inspired her to want to participate in dance. She says,

[83] With the exception of Pavi and Deklen, each of these participants currently live in the UK or USA.

[84] They include Guang, a first generation Chinese American, Motoko, from Japan, Pavi from India, Veronica from Poland, Mallory from the Netherlands, and Deklen from Italy. There were others from the UK and USA for whom this was also the case. These participants are simply grouped this way because their original background is other than the two dominant categories of locale.

Motoko, 40: USA

Basically, until I was thirty-something I didn't do any dance.

For others, academic pursuits came before recreational activities, Pavi came from a family of all girls where the expectation was that they would achieve academically and take up a professional career. She states that the education of women in such a manner was rare, and dancing was not a career path that was ever presented as an option.

Pavi, 62: India

I was one of the top students in my class of studies, and so this was expected and this was the background. That was my life. And in my school, also, people are selected for different hobbies. So, we had science hobby, we didn't have music and dance hobby.

Similarly, Deklen also mentioned that academics took precedence within his Italian family, where the notion of dancing was not something that was pursued by men.

Deklen, 40: Italy/Germany

I never thought about dancing because…I was kind of nerd guy in a lab, and my experience with movement was always clumsy.

As stated above, the participants who spoke about having danced as a child or adolescent disclosed a mixture of reactions and memories, with some of them expressing enjoyment and others having less than positive experiences. What was clear was that the role that dance played in their life as young people was very different from those as adults - even for those few who expressed that they loved dance and dancing at an early age. At later points in the interviews, comments were made in regards to their current dance participation as being more meaningful, or having formed a connection to self

and community that was deeper than when they were younger. For example, for Dean, his comments about his military training and the required ballroom dance classes were meant to turn him into, '*an officer and a gentleman'*. At the time, he found the lessons to be tedious, and as he says, '*it put me off dancing'*. When he later decided to take up dancing with his wife, they chose ballroom dancing because it was an activity they could pursue together. His earlier dislike of this style was replaced with a passion for it in part because he could now understand the nuances of the form, and it was an escape from an extremely stressful job. He also mentioned the TV programme *Strictly Come Dancing*[85] as being an influence, specifically because it was changing the way men were perceived in ballroom dance. These elements allowed him to release the difficult conclusions about dancing from his past, in order to embrace and integrate ballroom dancing into his adult life.

Of the participants who fell into the category of dancing when they were younger, only two continued with the style of dance mentioned as having been encountered earlier in life; Dean and his ballroom dancing being one of them. Daniel, who grew up dancing in the church, performed using styles that were lyrical and contemporary in nature. Many years later he discovered Vogue-ing and eventually progressed to an offshoot called Vogue Fem. The original style of Vogue, which utilises angular body shapes and staccato movements, becomes smoother and more flowing in the hybridised form. In this way Daniel was able to return to his roots of lyrical and contemporary, combining them with his passion for Vogue-ing. Laina did not dance as a

[85] A popular British television programme showcasing professional ballroom dancers and celebrity participants (2004 – present).

child, but she mentioned taking gymnastics for a short while, her favourite aspect being the combination of movement and music. A concert pianist by profession, she also spoke about being criticised by early teachers for moving too much when she played. Currently an avid West Coast swing dancer, she cites these two early experiences as culminating into her current love of dance.

Laina, 40: USA

I don't know that I can say other than that it was a joy to move once again to music. To be allowed and encouraged. For it to be ok for me to move to music. Which I had always wanted to do anyway.

What is clear from all the examples related to childhood or adolescent dance experiences is, whether positive or negative in their memory, what transpired later in life transcended the perceptions developed by the early events. Mezirow (2000) would classify these moments as meaning schemes in that somewhere in their past there already existed an experience that held the possibility for recall and remembrance. For some, the memory rekindled facets of experience and simply awakened and affirmed what was already in existence. These pieces from the past were simply integrated into the new experiences of the present. For others, the memory needed a revaluation to sidestep past fears or uncomfortable recollections. The alteration required that new meaning be attributed to the experience in order for a transformation of knowledge to both take place, and replace the former points of view.

4.3 Adult Introductions and Encounters

The first section introduced the dance experiences of the participants as children and adolescents. This next segment will present some of the types of encounters in which dance became a part of their lives as adults. In the introduction, I present the story of Bill from Texas, from whom the inspiration for this thesis partially evolved. What I found interesting, was how his unplanned meeting with dancing through entering a Twist contest caused an effect such that dance participation suddenly became something significant in his life. It is this type of 'breaking through' (London 2013) as spoken about above by London, where a new or altered awareness emerges, and acts as an opening for the acceptance of that which was previously discounted or rejected. London's definition appropriately encapsulates the participant's descriptions of the ways in which dance and dancing was discovered, in that it was either not specifically sought out, or the expected to produce the long-lasting or 'durable' benefits as spoken about by Stebbins (2000). Whether conscious or unconscious, common amongst the group is a type of awareness that a point of interruption from their prior life or understanding about dance has taken place. This suggests that the opportunity to change course or introduce a new pathway is available at any time.

According to Mezirow, for adults, the parameter needed for this type of change to occur depend on the willingness of the individual to let go of old and possibly long-held stereotypes or personally/socially constructed opinions. What is unclear is at what point this decision-making takes place, and the kinds of criterion needed for this to occur. As seen in the first part of this chapter, the degrees to which points of view and habits of mind are

formed are dependent upon the social and personal experiences of the individual. Some hold to the notion of “right place-right time”, and while this might be the case, it seems that many of the opinions and attitudes are deeply held, and a consequential happening needs to be present in for the changes to occur. As such, and specifically in relation to dance, are questions such as; how can a life be deeply affected simply by engaging in dance and dancing?, and, what are the parameters that might cause this to occur? Presented below are examples of the most prevalent themes present in the stories in regards to the reasons, as stated by the participants, behind their adult ‘*dance journeys’*.

4.4 Disorienting Dilemma

Mezirow posits that the process of transformative learning is activated through the experience of what he refers to as a ‘disorienting dilemma’ (1978). Described as form of life crisis that triggers a search for new meaning, these long-standing beliefs and values, often acquired in childhood, encourage a process of questioning that results in a significant shift. (Mezirow 2000, Cranton and Kroth 2014). Such dilemmas manifest in ways that are construed as ‘epochal’ occurring very quickly or out of the blue, or sustained, requiring many years for processing (Mezirow 1978, 1991, 2000, Mälkki 2012). Similar ideologically to an encounter, both concepts are indicative of a type of confrontation that occurs with the possibility of creating new knowledge and awareness.

Early in the interview process, a pattern began to emerge amongst the participants where experiences that were representations of such dilemmas (the death of a loved one, divorce or relationship changes, physical or

psychological illness or accident, the relocation to a new city, or simply the underlying need for life alteration) were revealed. A review of the data concluded that this type of experience was mentioned by approximately eighty-five percent of the participant group, but fell into two distinct categories: the catalyst for beginning to dance, or the resolution of an existing issue through participation in dance. In both instances, such an encounter served as the impetus towards the eventual resolution of the cause of the dilemma. For example, Jessica became a widow at the age of twenty-two. A trained musician, she joined a local operatic society to meet new people.

Jessica, 60: UK

There was a dance teacher there who recognised that I was sort of in distress. My husband died when I was twenty-two so I was lost and everything. So, she scooped me up and said, 'Come to my dance classes'.

Psychologist Lewis J. Rambo refers to such experiences as being in a form of crisis state, and suggests that they provide an opening for the opportunity of change to take place. He posits that the response to such an experience is dependent upon the severity of the crisis and falls into one of two categories, '…crises that call into question one's fundamental orientation to life, and crises that in and of themselves are rather mild, but are the proverbial straw that breaks that camel's back' (Rambo 1993: 46). The example given above of Jessica is representative of the former category, while Perry's falls into the latter.

Perry, 53: UK

I'd had a change in career. I stopped being a set and costume designer, partly through a number of productions that had been cancelled... I was looking for things to do as I suddenly had my evenings and weekends free. I didn't have those when I was in the theatre. So, I wanted to be social, I wanted company. I was quite lonely as a set and costume designer because I was working at home a lot, so I needed to go out and do things.

While each aspect reflects a variety of conditions, they are both representative of 'tensions' that have built up because of cumulative circumstances (Rambo 1993:47, Austin 1977), and exist as a 'felt discrepancy' (Lofland and Stark 1965:864) that manifests as crisis or conflict. Often presented from a negative perspective, Lofland and Stark suggest that these moments should be seen as 'turning points' and opportunities for change.

> The significance of [these various] turning points is that they increase the…awareness and desire to take some action about his problems, at the same time giving him a new opportunity to do so. Turning points were situations in which old obligations were diminished, and new involvements became desirable and possible.
>
> (Lofland and Stark 1965:870)

I found the use of the term 'turning point' appropriate in its application to the stories of the crisis types of encounters experienced by the participants because it describes an active form of moving from one state to another, and suggests an identifiable moment(s) where an event or happening took place. Each one of the participants spoke in detail about the circumstances that exposed them to dance, and, whether pleasant or not, that singular place and time stands out in their memories as a point of reference that symbolises a state of "from and to" represented in the idea of a turning point.

Although Mezirow, and others, do allow for the expression “disorienting dilemma” to cover a wide range of experiences, the terminology invites a particular connotation related to a feeling of confusion or awkwardness. On one hand, what both the concepts have in common is the providing of an opportunity to re-evaluate aspects of one’s life and belief systems. On the other hand, Mezirow describes a disorienting dilemma as a form of ‘acute internal or external personal crisis’ (Roberts 2013: 101, Mezirow 1978), and it is here that the two terms diverge. While many of the participants did begin to participate in dance activities and events after experiencing a personal life crisis, their encounter with dance was not necessarily a direct reaction *to* the crisis. Rather it was a response to moving forward with their lives *after* the crisis had passed, its actualisation occurring as a residual product. For example, before beginning hip-hop dance, Guang was recently divorced from his wife (disorienting dilemma). As a result of the divorce he spent a lot of time watching movies, some of which contained this dance style (visual encounter). Seeking a new form of physical exercise, his curiosity about hip hop was piqued by the films and prompted him to go to a local studio and try out a class (physical encounter). While there he met encouraging teachers and other adult dancers (social encounter) to whom he gives credit for encouraging his continued participation. Each of these types resulted in a process of constructing new and/or re-evaluated belief systems, as well as subsequent unexpected associations.

Returning to the excerpts from Marco’s interview, the description of his encounter with dance as a thirteen-year-old produced a reaction of feeling humiliated and ashamed. His reaction at the time was also one of re-

evaluation of these feelings as they related to dance and dancing, which included a reaction to what he perceived to be the socio-cultural restrictions placed upon him. The result was a difficult association that both introduced and produced these feelings, as well as a compromised future relationship with dance participation. As an adult, Marco's discovery of dance was one of many changes he was making in his lifestyle after experiencing the death of a loved one. An encounter that he describes as *'a mystical meeting'* with a friend caused him to begin attending Dances of Universal Peace sessions. While there, he was not only confronted with encounters challenging his experiences with dance, but also those associated with what he considered to be the culturally constructed masculine role within dance. As such, his process of revaluation took place within multiple levels and contexts, placing him in a position of perceiving many aspects of his prior views differently.

In both of Marco's adolescent and adult examples, the change towards a re-assessment of his belief system about dance and dancing was primarily related to experiences and events which challenged a core sense of knowledge, values, and self, many of which were based upon the perception of culturally imposed norms. The application of the word encounter to these experiences denotes that a pointed action or meeting occurred, which contains the perpetual possibility for movement in one direction or another. As such, it possesses a modicum of flexibility, and can be expanded to include multiple types of experiences.

What I interpret from the stories is a form of counterbalance between disorienting dilemmas and encounters, as each serve as a system that

provokes a revaluation process. Although separate entities, they do maintain a somewhat cause and effect relationship, with one or the other pinpointed as the catalyst for change. This type of catalyst response was important to recognise because not all the participants described a disorienting dilemma or crisis situation as the reason for beginning to dance. There were some who returned after a long absence, and under different circumstances, and others who describe their experience of discovery as a sort of calm awakening. A third category, which seemed the most relevant to the term, were those that spoke about an extra-ordinary type of encounter through which a profound revelation seemed to materialise.

4.5 Extraordinary Encounter

For many of the participants, the experience of a profound encounter in conjunction with a dance event was the starting place for their adult involvement. It was not uncommon amongst the participants for the mention of a specific moment where they sensed that a form of dynamic change took place. In the original plan for this research, it was the exploration of this type of experience that was the focus. Bob's exclamation of '*in that moment my life was forever changed'* suggested that an instantaneous confrontation could interrupt and alter a set pattern of long held beliefs, setting an individual on a new course of thinking and behaving. Similar statements were expressed amongst the participant group, and was the impetus behind the exploration of literature related to types of religious conversion. Although the patterns in the stories suggest that the alterations of both belief systems and lifestyle take place over time, such claims of an 'extra-ordinary' happening (Abrahams 1986) refer to a specific dance event where a physical and emotional

sensation is identified. Such experiences took them outside of their everyday existence, and stand apart as a bounded moment in time.

Although not likened specifically to dance, Mezirow posits that experiences like those of a peak or flow can either trigger or further embed the point of view developed as a part of transformative learning (1991, 2000). A characteristic of an extraordinary encounter can include a distinct recollection of details associated with the experience. It was often obvious that a participant was entering this mode in discussion because the details used to describe the experience increased in specificity. These moments were regularly recalled during the conversation, and referred to as being touch points for both the starting point and eventual development of their participation with dance. Educationalists Brent G. Wilson and Patrick Parish refer to this understanding as a transformative learning experience and describe it as, 'an especially meaningful encounter that leaves a lasting impact on a person's sense of competence or place in the world' (Wilson and Parish 2010: 1). Similar to that of a peak experience in that the lasting impact has the possibility to alter a person's perspective in ways both personal and global, the transformative learning experience is one that often infiltrates multiple areas of life.

Some participants described this type of an encounter as an '*aha!*' moment, where a new understanding was revealed. Others referred to an impression of *'time stopping'*, where *'everything became clearer'*, or *'in that moment I just "knew" that dance was what I should be doing'*. Such stories were relayed in a manner that included distinct sights, smells, people, and specific artefacts that seemed to remain embedded in the participants' memories, and when

recalled also brought to the surface an emotional response that differed from other parts of the conversation. For the participants for whom this type of experience occurred, it came most often at the start of their interactions with dance, often compelling them to return in the hopes of continuing to encounter such circumstances.

Cathy, 40: UK/Spain

I felt euphoric. I wanted to see more. Oh my, it was like that. I wanted to see more. It was… wow. That was it and I started to go to dance just afterwards. Because… it was like – I feel very good and I like it very much.

Kade, 52: USA/UK

So within literally my first hour there [at the ballroom dance studio]*, the writing was on the wall, 'this is what you are going to do'. In big letters. It was a lightning bolt…It's the moment that you want…I've described it often to people, to friends, and they go, 'I want to have a moment like that!'. So, it's a moment that you want when you want the Divine inspiration. You just know, THIS is what I am going to do. This is where I am going to move to. This is the house I should buy. This is the person I should get married to. You just know. You feel light, you feel buoyant, it's literally like the heavens open and the sun shines – the sunlight shines through. And you have this kind of outer body experience of…Yeah, I guess in the movies when, when they show somebody getting dizzy, or like they are going to faint. And they have the focus on the person on the background like they are all fuzzy and kind of weird and out of focus. It was a bit like that! And I just went, 'this is what I'm going to do!'. And it's one of those experiences that you can't make happen. You want it to happen so much, but you can't manifest it, purposely. It comes only when the pieces fall into place, and the moment is ready. And you just hope you have your eyes open enough to see it when it happens.*

It was common for references to concepts related to spiritual understanding to be a part of these recollections. Kade's mention of the '*writing on the wall*' and '*Divine inspiration*' fall into this category, and she later explained that these were the only types of words and phrases that she knew to associate with this type of experience. Sharon and Lucy are members of religious orders, and therefore equated both the experience and the language of it as being

something spiritual. As mentioned earlier, others used the words '*burning bush' or 'road to Damascus'* moment. No matter the terminology used, it refers to a type of unexpected encounter where there is a form of awakening that results in new knowledge and altered perceptions. It is also in alignment with Lofland and Stark's previously referred to concept of a turning point where openings for change and action result in perceived possibilities. The majority who experienced such a happening, mentioned as something that took place at the start of their exposure to dance, and the feelings that resulted were partly responsible for their continued participation. But for others this type of euphoric moment happened many years after starting to dance, and as with a flow type of experience, was something that came about as a result of dancing that might not have taken place otherwise. Mallory is one such example:

Mallory, 51: UK/Belgium

After seeing a flyer in a local library Mallory began to attend 5Rhythms sessions at a local dance studio. Described as a 'freestyle movement vocabulary'[86] that was developed by dancer Gabrielle Roth (see Roth 1989), a 5Rhythms session is built around what is referred to as a 'Wave' (meaning that it begins slowly, builds in energy, and returns to stillness) which directs the dancers in the way they should move. The official website refers to the practice in terms of a form of spiritual practice where possibilities for emotional exploration and healing are present.

[86] https://www.5rhythms.com/gabrielle-roths-5rhythms/why-we-dance-them/: (accessed 20/12/16)

> In dancing 5Rhythms you can track perceptions and memories; seek out gestures and shapes; tune into instincts and intuitions. They reveal ways to creatively express aggressiveness and vulnerability, emotions and anxieties, edges and ecstasies. They reconnect us to cycles of birth, death and renewal and hook us up to the spirit in all living things. They initiate us back into the wisdom of our bodies and unleash movement's dynamic healing power.[87]

From the beginning, she enjoyed the sessions and remarked at how welcome she felt with her teacher and fellow classmates. After a few years, Mallory began to attend week-long retreat style workshops in which 5Rhythms was a primary activity. On one such occasion, after she had been dancing for about five years, she experienced what she refers to as '*one of the most profound experiences of my life'*. She says,

But I remember we danced, it was this attic space. This lovely attic space where we danced, and my father had died…about a year? Less than a year earlier. And I just remember when we were dancing and when we got to the sort of chaos bit, I just went into this really really weird frenzy. I just, I just kept making the same movement. Very powerful with sort of my fist punching the air, and I totally lost, absolutely where I was. It was really like, so weird to have that sort of like feeling of total…I really was, I really was, I lost the room and didn't know where I was. I just totally went into it and I think, I think that everybody just got out of my way to be honest. Because I was just thrashing around in this, I don't know. And it was really weird. For me, it felt like it lasted half-an hour or so, but it was only a few minutes I imagine. But it felt like really…

And I was just so angry, I felt so angry. That's one of the things I really dance in 5Rhythms *anyway. And that my father died so early when he had so much to live for, and um, yeah…and I kind of came back to the room when somebody just, somebody just…I think somebody was behind me, touching me back. I was on the floor and someone was in front of me, and they were just supporting me. It was so wonderful… It was so so fantastic. And I had this image that the teacher was playing the same track over and over again; because it was a really powerful…track. And I never really asked how long it lasted…I was embarrassed, but also really relieved that I could have that experience, and go so deep into it. It was just a fantastic experience.*

[87] https://www.5rhythms.com/gabrielle-roths-5rhythms/why-we-dance-them/: (accessed 20/12/16)

What is interesting about Mallory's example, is that the crisis state linked with the movement activity seemed to provide a combination of elements that allowed her to engage with her grief. Towards the end of the interview she remarked that she had attended therapy sessions to try and deal with the loss of her father, but it was through the process of dancing that she felt like she could release her unresolved emotions. She believes that it was only because of the physical and emotional comfort and confidence that she gained because of her many years of dancing that allowed her to let go and '*dance her anger*'.

Last year when I danced with [a 5Rhythms teacher], *he sort of said…'try to get into a deep emotion', and I thought you know, I will go into anger again. I suddenly realised that it was all gone…I didn't have any anger left. That was actually the reason that I contacted you because it was just so profound that I actually managed to get rid of the anger. And I still miss him, and I'm still sad, but I'm not angry anymore. And I would say that I never would have achieved that without dance.*

Three other participants spoke about experiencing a form of ecstatic experience after having danced for many years, with the significant moment coming only after becoming comfortable with the dance "in" their bodies. Common to all of them was the engagement in dance forms where the movement vocabulary was either repetitive or improvisatory, and where the participants all remarked that the musical accompaniment played an important role.

Rebecca, who also practices 5Rhythms, experienced what she considers to be an ecstatic experience in her first session. She cites that as she has continued to explore both her own life challenges with anorexia through this

technique, she has experienced similar euphoric happenings on an ongoing basis. Rebecca offers,

It [5Rhythms] *is accessing parts of me…in the dance I never know what I'm going to be like…it unlocks these parts of me that I can only express in dance.*

Sharon and Lucy both participate in sacred circle dance and spoke about extra-ordinary moments that occurred after several years of engaging with this form. Both women are personally and professionally active in religious life and consider their dance participation as Lucy says, *'an outward expression of my inner prayers'*. Sacred circle dance is made up of short choreographed phrases that are repeated while moving anti-clockwise in a circular formation. The dances favoured by Lucy and Sharon were created by specific individuals with whom both have studied for many years, and cite that although they participated in liturgical dance forms before encountering their preferred teachers, it is the combination of method, music, and intention that has made them devotees.

Lucy, 69: UK

Although the movements were simple, it asked us to use the whole body…it touched something very deep inside me. At that moment, I prayed through dance. The dimension of the music [was used] *to take one inward. There is a certain movement that takes you open and in that moment, I recognised that I was opening myself to God, and therefore I could dance my prayer. And I needed to take off my shoes. I needed to feel the ground.*

Sharon, 46: UK

In the middle of a dance, I felt very very strongly...I had one of those transcendent mystical experiences. And it's one of those that you really can't describe, because it is "other". The closest I can get to it is, love coming down. And so, this is happening in the middle of a dance and you've got to keep your feet moving at this stage, because if you stop and go 'Why!' it ruins it for everyone else. So, I kept going.

A third category saw neither a flash of inspiration, or momentous happening, but rather a slow understanding that a change had taken place.

Geoffrey, 70: UK

I think myself and [my daughter] *have only missed two* rehearsals [of the integrated company] in almost 14 years! *So it obviously has grabbed both of us. And I think that...what grabs me particularly is the dance, but seeing other people being able to use dance for their own development. And (pausing)...it's a very warm place to go to, and* [The director] *is marvellous. He'll take, he'll take a risk, like we'll never be able to put* [a dancer] *on stage for instance, and he does. And* [she] *responds.* [The director] *he has this lovely confidence with us as a group that I suppose I'm repaying really. So for me, the transformation has been one that slowly built up over all these years.*

The placement within the interview of this type of happening varied amongst the participants. Some spoke quite openly from the start of our conversation, while others waited until they became more comfortable with me and the overall interview scenario. Specific times, places, dates, clothing choices, and smells were all a part of the memory. Their facial expression also changed, with a registered look of calm that often altered to include emotional reactions that ranged from joyful exclamations to sorrowful tears. It was during these moments that I began to gauge not only the depth of meaning placed on their experience with dance and dancing, but that the reasons for the adoption of such significance, which came from a greater emotional well than first realised. No matter the situation, what was common amongst them all was that the alteration occurred as a result of their encounter with, or involvement in dance, and it left an indelible impression that compelled them to continue dancing.

In her study about ballet dancers and their verbal responses to peak experiences while performing, psychologist Lynda Flower found that the dancers she spoke to also responded in a similar manner, describing their moments as 'extraordinary; that is different from the ordinary and the everyday' (Flower 2016:70). Although the continued conversations with them included discussions of spiritual experience, she did also relate them to other theories that measure and discuss out of the ordinary involvement - Maslow's concept of peak experience, and Csíkszentmihályi's theory of flow. Both approaches, written about in Chapter three, refer to similar types of explanations and descriptions as relayed by the participants. While Flower's study was based upon professional performances, the participants in this research primarily engage with dance as a leisure activity. However, the physical, emotional, and rational narrative carry the same context of an unusual and unexpected phenomena.

Dance scholars Karen Bond and Susan Stinson (2000) found similarities in vocabulary in their study of phenomenal dance experiences of young people. Also, citing the work of Maslow and Csíkszentmihályi amongst others, they sought to capture the voices of young people when describing both ordinary and 'superordinary' (Bond and Stinson 2000: 52) moments with dance. The words and phrases used by the students were again, similar in content and context to those of the participants. Described by Bond as 'sensory-emotional' (ibid: 76), the language touches a place of subjective introspection that is largely associated with spiritual and mystical experiences. In her reflection, Bond posits that these types of descriptions might provoke feelings of discomfort for both individuals and readers, especially in relation to Western

ideologies (ibid: 76). This notion of discomfort was expressed at times by some of the participants in my research when, immediately after or a few days later, they asked that the description of the extra-ordinary experience be treated carefully, as well as assurance that their names would be altered. Sharon's comment of '*Take some care with what you do with this please*' seemed to encompass the sentiment of all who made such remarks. The worry generally centred around the possible discovery of such an experience by their professional colleagues, and how their opinion of them might be altered. Maslow (1964) hypothesised that at some point in their lifetime everyone experiences some sort of peak experience. Wilson and Parish refer to this type of understanding as a transformative learning experience and describe it as, 'an especially meaningful encounter that leaves a lasting impact on a person's sense of competence or place in the world' (Wilson and Parish 2010: 1). Like that of a peak experience in that the lasting impact has the possibility to shift one's perspective in ways both personal and global, the transformative learning experience in one that often infiltrates multiple areas of life and relationships.

Distinct language also accompanied the description in religious or spiritual terminology. The stories might have been described in such a way because this type of experience is often related to a form of religion or spirituality. For example, Kade's reference to a '*burning bush moment', 'writing on the wall'* and *'Divine inspiration'* fall into this category, and she later explained that these were the only words and phrases that she knew to associate with such a happening. Although Sharon and Lucy are members of religious orders, and therefore equated both the experience and the language as being something

spiritual, others with no such affiliation continued to frame or explain it within a similar context. This trajectory was also reinforced by statements such as '*Dance is my religion'*, and other references to faith and spirituality. Therefore, the most relevant aspects have been extracted and applied to these narratives in a way that is both subjective and secular. Although not a study meant to emphasise such "spiritual" types of encounters, the continual mentioning of these types of moments necessitated an engagement with investigating the topic of conversion, especially as it was referred to in this way by many of the participants.

While the attribution of such significance may or may not be true, with the nature of the experience involving many factors other than dance that helped bring about the change (see Chapter one), it is the conviction that dance itself is the defining factor that has made the difference. Dance aside, within the narratives it was, in part, the language used to describe the metamorphic experience that began to interest me. All in all, what was clear to me from each of these characterisations, is that some sort of dynamic personal transformation took place, out of which blossomed a new form of understanding and worldview. The following will help to illuminate this point further.

4.6 Synchronicity and Serendipity: Connecting the Internal and External Pathways

Not unlike London's notion of something unexpected that 'breaks through', as well as the types of chance encounters spoken about by Bandura (1982), synchronicity and serendipity are terms common to an experience that seems to occur "out of the blue" and result in a form of transformation or lasting impression. The concept of synchronicity was introduced by Carl Jung in 1929 and according to psychologist Joseph Cambray, 'his justification [for introducing synchronicity] was the failure of any strictly Cartesian description of events (which assumes a mind-body dualism) to account for phenomena outside a straightforward cause and effect paradigm' (Cambray 2002:411). Rooted in the notion that a coincidental happening is acausal, or outside of the known laws of cause and effect, [88] Jung (1955) believed a synchronistic phenomenon to be the coming together of events both internal and external with the inner unconscious psyche serving as the dominant instigator in the decision-making process throughout a human life. Part of this psyche was conceived as an archetype that connected the individual to the larger collective unconscious. According to religious studies scholar Harold Coward,

> …Jung conceived of the archetype as interrelating the meaning content of the internal psyche with the meaning content of the external cosmos. When the two connected, an experience of synchronicity took place. The deeper meaning within one's psyche was experienced in relation to a corresponding meaning to an external reality.
>
> (Coward 1996:481)

[88] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/acausal: (Accessed 19 February, 2017)

This intertwining of the conscious and unconscious needs of each individual contains what Jung believed to the cause for a synchronistic moment. Coward refers to Jung when he posits that 'the archetype is an "arranger" of psychic forms inside and outside the psyche into meaningful patterns' (Coward 1996:481), and it is the collection of meaningful patterns that brings one closer to the full manifestation of the 'self' (ibid:479), which is the ultimate fulfilment within human reality. Although Jung posited that synchronistic events were essentially acausal (Jung 1955: 11), he also believed that each happening was preconceived in our unconscious. In some way, then, what is seen to be an incredible coincidence is actually a form of 'precognitive awareness' (Vaughan 1991:44) unknown until it surfaces to the individual's consciousness. It is these patterns of coming to know the unknown that forms the consideration that the new awareness contains meaningful insight for the individual.

I bring these concepts into the discussion not only because of the use of these specific terms by the participants, but as a means by which to return to the discussion of attitudes and opinions referenced at the start of the chapter, specifically referring to the notion of an acausal experience. For those who admired dancing, or longed to dance as children, a pre-conscious link is one that could be perceived as being obvious. According to Mezirow, the pre-conscious is a form of underlying knowledge that exists within a realm of what could be considered a 'felt sense' rather than something that can be expressed verbally (Mezirow 1991). In other words, was there an already existing desire to participate in dance that was simply lying dormant until the

opportunity presented itself? As stated earlier in the thesis, the reasons dance was chosen over other activities is difficult to pinpoint, especially for those who stated that they had no desire to dance prior to their encounter. Perhaps, as expressed by Carys, dance appeared at the necessary moment and fulfilled missing aspects of her life of which she was were either consciously or unconsciously aware.

Carys, 28: UK

Maybe you didn't think about all of the other things that you tried, like I've done lots of other activities before…and you probably don't pinpoint me, because otherwise we would be having this discussion about climbing. And because that didn't bring me the right kind of joy that I was looking for…I didn't know I was looking for [dance], until I found it.

Her final line indicates that there is always present the possibility for the entrance of some "thing" that carries with it the prospect of discovering a new-found interest. For Carys, what kept her dancing was the feeling of joy that she experienced because of her participation. In other words, it was the emotional response that allowed her to continue along the pathway. For others, it was the discovery of and acceptance into a new community, the opportunity to experience physical touch, the need for escape, or simply the enjoyment of moving to music. In other words, there was no single reason given for the "why" of the continued journey into dancing. It is my assessment that it more than likely fulfilled that which was deemed missing, and once achieved, could be continued or discarded. It could also have been the feelings of power and satisfaction of continued improvement that seemed to spur them forward after the initial goals were realised. There was always one more step to learn, or continued improvements to be made; rarely was there the simple satisfaction of staying at the current level of accomplishment.

These aspects of their experience will be further discussed in the next chapters.

No matter the reasons for continuing, what has been shown above are some examples of the starting points; the places from which dance emerged, as well as the ways in which it was encountered, that enabled the participants to begin on their personal dance pathways. For Mezirow, it is this place of beginning that holds the place of greatest importance when overcoming deeply held habits of mind. It is within the phase of introductions where old patterns are suspended or discarded, and new systems of belief are allowed to transpire. From here, there opens the space for new levels of enquiry and discovery which lead to further states of transformation.

This chapter introduced and presented examples of different types of encounters discussed in the interviews. Important to this research is the claim from the participants that dance came into their lives through unexpected meetings, and either began or altered their experience in such a way that former understandings were abandoned in favour of a life that included dance and dancing. No matter the childhood or adult experience, such moments stand as starting points from which a connection to dance occurred. Although intertwined, the encounter serves as the departure or ‘break through’ moment, where clear dividing lines are created. From there, further affiliations, in a variety of incarnations, are developed. It is these that will be the topic of discussion in Chapter five.

Chapter Five – Relationships

5.1 Relationships

Relationships are defined as 'the way in which two or more people or things are connected.'[89] Although a seemingly simple definition, relationships in any configuration are complex structures that occur because of a meeting with a person, event, thing, or circumstance, and provide a source through which individuals form associative connections with themselves and other people or situations. The relationships people engage with provide foundations for growth and learning, but are unique to each individual, and their interpretation and involvement further define their purpose and goals. Sociologist Steve Duck argues that 'relationships are driven by a need to create meaning…' (Duck 1994: xii), and are contextually situated representations of both what and with whom an individual chooses to engage. He continues,

> …relationships are more than mere sequences of behaviour or cumulations of individual acts, but gain their existence from the meanings of such sequences and cumulations. It is the investment of such things with dynamic continuity that provides a context for partners to comprehend their connectedness to one another.
>
> (Duck 1994: xii, xiii)

In the stories told by the participants, there is an inference that their associations with dance and dancing have been defined by interactions with a person, situation, event, or happening. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, relationships extend beyond that which exists between humans, and include the connections between dance, self, and others, as they relate to

[89] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/relationship: (Accessed November 12, 2016)

the investigation of the development and alteration of the childhood, adolescent and adult systems of belief. Keeping in mind the personal and social links, the evidence of these associations provided the largest and most diverse amount of information. The chart below encompasses the types present in the stories, the focus of which are those that have to do with dance and the dance experience, including physical and non-physical, as well as those aspects that relate to social, cultural, and interpersonal.

Dance Relationships		
Type	**Interpersonal Relationships**	**Intrapersonal Relationship**
Non-Physical (Positive or negative, verbal, attitude/opinion/memory based)	Supporters of Dance (Dance and non-dance communities, teachers, friends, family)	Relationship to the physical body
Physical (Non-verbal, physically active, body based)	Non-supporters of Dance (Family, friends, and non-dance community)	Relationship to the "self" (Identity)

The heading of dance relationships refers to the overall association between the participants and dance/dancing, and serves as the overarching concept that ties all the categories together. Dance scholar Marc Raymond Strauss states that, 'dance is not just about movement alone…', and expresses that it exists and should be examined from levels emotional, physical, and conceptual (Strauss 2003: 297). Therefore, each of the themes and sub-themes arose from the patterns found across the stories, and represent the roles they play in the broader aims of the research.

5.2 Non-Physical Relationships with Dance

The notion of a non-physical relationship to dance was one that appeared in both the adult and adolescent discussions. The most prevalent examples were related to early encounters; however, they were not absent from the adult experiences. For example, Cathy's introduction occurred while watching a ballet performance for the first time, and she cites it as being foundational to her later connections to dance. She says,

Cathy, 40: Spain/UK

It was a theatrical experience that I had never had before. It had the music, which was beautiful. It had the dancing bodies and the harmony. And behind that I could see like a sensibility of harmony and beauty that appealed to me. It was like discovering something I had never seen before.

I felt euphoric. I wanted to see more. Oh my, it was like that. I wanted to see more. It was… wow. That was it and I started to go to see dance [performances] just afterwards. Because… it was like – I feel very good and I like it very much.

Cathy mentioned that the memory of this first encounter continues to serve as the inspiration for her current work as a dance scholar focusing on ballet studies, although she later decided to take up folk dancing, she sees the two genres as occupying unrelated roles in her life. Therefore, her relationship to what she refers to as her primary connection to dance is one where she is an observer and scholar. Calvin also spoke about seeing a ballet performance which had an inspirational effect. At the time, he was a student at a military academy, but inquired if he might join the associated school for the ballet company. The response he received stated that at seventeen he was too old to join as a student, but the memory of that initial impact stayed with him for the rest of his life.

Other participants cited verbal encounters as adolescents as the reason for rejecting dance activities. As seen with the earlier example of Marco, it was the language used to reprimand them that resulted in feelings of shame and discomfort, and an understanding that it was inappropriate for boys to dance together. Ralph and Matthew also recalled childhood experiences where individuals close to them verbalised their disapproval of their interest in dancing. These situations arose because of the use of derogatory language, and often included examples of what could be considered clichés or socially biased comments about dance. In two such cases, each participant denied having had any affiliation to dance as a child or adolescent, when in fact it there was one – it was simply present in the form of a painful memory.

A third example presents a fantasy perception of dance/a dancer acting as the primary agent of the non-physical relationship. Occurring only amongst the female participants in my sample group, the notion of a "dancer" was an idealised conceptualisation formed either out of their imagination, or as a result of viewing or reading about dance. Rebecca commented, *'I always admired dancers'*, but she never had the confidence or opportunity to pursue it so opted for visual arts as her means for creative expression. Lynn and Delia expressed similar longings that were never realised because of a lack of financial resources. Celine also mentioned fantasising about being a dancer.

Celine, 32: USA

When I was a little girl I wanted to be a ballerina so badly. 'The Red Shoes'[90] was my favourite movie…But I never got to know the ballet dream.

[90] *'The Red Shoes'* (1948) is a movie retelling the popular Hans Christian Anderson story of a ballerina possessed by a pair of red shoes that make her dance until her death.

These types of descriptions and what they revealed came as a surprise in the overall analysis of the interviews. At the developmental stages of the research, as well as throughout the interview process, the focus was on the actual physical practice of dance or lack thereof, rather than the non-physical[91] influences such as social, cultural, or familial interactions. The focus centred on the participatory aspects such as taking part in a class or activity, and did not consider the consequences of a verbal exchange or socialised understanding. Therefore, that which constituted a relationship needed to be reconceived into one where the connections to dance were re-examined and reframed. These influences and affiliations in turn represent important links that might have otherwise been overlooked had the focus remained solely on the physical representations. Instead what was uncovered were underlying associations to dance, dancing, and dance events/experiences that were overlooked in the initial research design.

Therefore, a non-physical relationship to dance within this research, refers to an experience other than one where the participant moves his/her body in a dance like manner. As seen above, the examples mentioned by the participants include viewing others dancing, verbal interactions, or other such encounters that produced a visceral, emotional, or remembered connection to dance and dancing. This discrepancy was realised after an anomaly related to

[91] It is recognised that physicality is involved in all interactions, and is meant here to represent those that are outside of a context of physical dance movement activities. Examples might be conversations, opinions, peer pressure, etc. In other words, those that are relegated more to mental processing rather than physical engagement.

the recounted stories, as well as aspects related to the recruitment and interview process, was discovered. Both are discussed further below.

5.3 Claims and Memory of Dance

Memories and the stories created from them form the foundations for the construction of how we present ourselves to the world (Mezirow 1990, 2000, Kahneman 2010). What we remember and how we remember are created positions that serve a purpose in the moment, and stories are often woven in such a way that they oblige privilege to the teller (Polkinghorne 1988). As such, the truth of the telling resides only with the narrator and can be altered, embellished, or re-constructed to serve his or her purpose. The stories told by the participants for this research present their experiences from a standpoint that takes advantage of such a privilege, and as such, contain what might be considered a modified state of reality created to fit the intentions of their current life and system of belief. This is not to say that the stories they are telling are not true, but the whole truth of them exists only within the boundaries of their memories, and memories are often influenced by emotions, experiences, or circumstances. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman (2010,[92] 2012) divides the notion of the self into the categories of 'experiencing and remembering', the former existing in the present and acting as an interpreter of the latter; when sharing stories, the interpretation of the past has to pass through the experience of the present. He suggests that 'the endings are very important', meaning that it is both the memory of the event, either positive or negative, that has an influence, as well as the point of view that reflects their present knowledge. Therefore, the current 'end point' in

[92] https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory: (Accessed 16 October, 2016)

regards to dance and dancing for the participants, is one that occupies a place of great significance. As such, the memory then runs the risk of becoming what Parrish and Wilson refer to as a ‘constructed view of experience’ (Parrish and Wilson 2010: np).

When recruiting participants to interview, the literature provided asked for individuals who did not formally or professionally train as dancers in childhood or adolescence (see appendix A and B), and considered dance to have had a meaningful impact on their adult lives. For the most part, those who self-selected to participate stated that they had fully read the requirements and felt like they were appropriate for my research. There are a few who did express an interest, but were open about the fact that they had some dance training when they were young. These people were included because they felt like their adult experience had vastly different meaning in their lives. However, the evidence related to the claims of having had little or no dance training as a young person turned out to be quite complex, and reflected a greater association with dance and dancing than initially realised. It is here that the claims of having no connections diverged, which led me to question “their truth” about the presentation of this part of the story. Whether this was because of a need to place a greater emphasis on their current adult experience with dance, or the notion that it held a lesser place of importance in their younger lives is unknown. But what is apparent is a misrepresentation of the evidence about non-relationships to dance in childhood or adolescence.

Other possibilities for some participants’ original denial might exist, including the enthusiasm for their current involvement and the opportunity to share that with a researcher. A regular comment included such statements as said by

Laina, '*It's so fun to have somebody interested in me talking about dancing!',* or from Parker, '*I don't get the chance to have that kind of conversation* [about dance] *very often and I really appreciate it.'* Therefore, similar to my original thinking about physical versus non-physical relationships, the connection may simply have not been made by the participants either. As such, in the overall assessment, it became important to also consider the intentions of the narrator. This especially pertained to the types of memories related to dance, and the ways in which they shaped their attitudes and involvements in childhood and adolescence. What for some was a seemingly benign experience, pointed to much larger reasons for the development of their systems of belief. The interviews revealed that, whether physically dancing or not, conceptions and opinions about dance and dancers began to form at a very young age, and frequently highlighted were those remembered links that were interwoven with those of peers, family, or friends (see Stinson, Blumenfield-Jones, and Van Dyke 1990, Sanderson 2008). Family influence and participation were cited most often, with peer groups mentioned secondly, as the most prominent reasons why dancing was or was not engaged with when young, especially in childhood and adolescence.

For example, Matthew was one who clearly stated about his adolescent memories about dance,

Matthew, 47: USA/Mexico

Never in a million years did it occur to me that I could take a dance class, and that I could dance. Never! I was so cerebral – so, so cerebral.

His was a claim that totally denied any adolescent relationship to dance because he was focused on activities such as his academic work and attending Hebrew school. He was not one who participated in sports and says,

I was totally disconnected from my physical self.

However, at another point in the interview he recalled the following memory,

When I was maybe three or four or five [years old], *very young, I loved to dance in my basement. It was in New England, a suburb of Boston; basements are common in that part of the world. I remember one time where my family had a portable record player down in the basement; I remember that one time, my family and my Grandma and my Grandpa saw me doing this, and were just laughing hysterically, and it hurt my feelings.*

Although Matthew never implicitly made the connection within the interview, in a follow up conversation he did respond that this experience and the memory associated with it did play a role in his views about dancing. He says,

Yes, it did. I remember being turned off by dance as an adolescent - I felt-thought it was boring to watch nor did I do it. I remember feeling something like a mix of ´turned off´ and confused in relation to dance…I find it interesting to note, that this was the only art form that I had this negative reaction to as an adolescent-young person-child. I loved to go to the theatre, I had a very strong connection with renaissance painting and sculpture, I went to museums in my own city and when I travelled, I enjoyed going to music concerts, too. I even was somewhat aware of architecture and design… So, it was only dance that got the negative-confused, almost annoyed response.

In this sense, Matthew's memory and subsequent non-physical relationship became a form of embedded consequence of, or related to that childhood encounter. Mezirow refers to these circumstantial decisions as those which guide our choices and actions, and from them are constructed a 'set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experience' (Mezirow

1990: 1). Returning to the discussion related to encounters, Matthew clearly states that his feelings were hurt when he was laughed at by his grandparents, and from that he experienced what could be construed as disorienting consequences. He was engaging in an activity which he enjoyed, and interpreted the laughter as mocking his actions rather than being entertained by them. This formed a mental or remembered association with dance and dancing that solidified into a conclusion that all similar experiences would result in such an outcome.

Mezirow's meaning perspectives are a descriptor for this type of experience as they are, 'uncritically acquired in childhood through the process of socialisation, often in the context of an emotionally charged relationship with parents, teachers, or other mentors' (Mezirow 1990:4). He comments that the more emotion that is felt within the experience, the 'more deeply embedded and intractable' they are towards change and future learning opportunities (ibid: 4). Therefore, when examining the non-physical aspects, what must be considered are the possible reasons that might have brought about this type of response. As such, relationships are not only the connections to individuals and experiences in our present, they are also the ties that bind us to the happenings of our past.

A secondary discovery revealed another discrepancy, this time related to the use of language in the interview questions. When reviewing the transcripts, I realised that the original wording on the flyer, which specified that the participants have little or no 'dance training', was abandoned in the interview process. Instead participants were asked about their adolescent experiences with dance/dancing in one of two ways: 'did you dance when you were

younger/growing up?', or 'what was your relationship or experience with dance as a child or adolescent?' Although similar in nature, they are in fact, two very distinct questions that have the possibility of eliciting different answers. The first prompts the responder to think about dance as specifically a physical activity, as well as allowing for a closed yes or no type of answer. The second question, which is more open ended, provides the opportunity for a greater variety of answers that includes more than just physical participation. As with any form of ethnographic interview, it is important to provide questions that draw out a thorough response instead of a stilted reaction (Spradely 1979). Over the course of the thirty-eight interviews, there was no distinct pattern showing how or why the question was alternated. It was an unconscious occurrence on my part which was discovered quite by accident when reading through the transcripts. But it informed the examination of the responses in a way that might otherwise have been overlooked. What is unknown is how it altered the participant responses, but the greatest impact was on the ways in which the participant's answers and claims were analysed, and reflects upon what constitutes an experience or relationship to dance. Parker's story will be used as an illustration.

Parker, 58: USA

Parker is fifty-eight years old and is the artistic director of a professional contemporary dance company. He was referred to me by a professional colleague because, as both claimed in their original correspondence, he had had no dance training as an adolescent, and drastically changed his personal and professional adult life to include dance. When reviewing the transcript about his childhood and adolescence, there was no mention of ever having

taken any dance classes. However, he was asked to speak about his *experiences* with dance as an adolescent to which he responded:

My dad was an off-Broadway singer, dancer, song-writer guy before he went on to International Relations… But growing up…most of my dad's friends were Broadway people. So, growing up, Christmas dinner would be just this group of his friends who I would later find out were Hal Prince, Michael Bennett, and those guys. All of these people who were just my dad's friends turned out to be people whose shows I would go see and stand in the wings and watch. And not have any idea that that was unusual… So, I think that the best way to say it is accessibility, and understanding that art was a very human thing. I came at it not as somebody trying to do it, but as somebody that was around it, and so it was never intimidating that way.

Parker's story was the first where I began to realise that the words *experience* and *relationship* might connote a different response than those related to dance activity. Parker's adolescent memories about dance were related to people and place; with the memory serving as the active link. He therefore did not need to perform any steps to have either an experience and/or a relationship with dance.

Although seemingly obvious, it was within this discovery that key information regarding inquiries about dance memories, stories, and belief systems was revealed. In any interview the use of specific language in the questions plays a vital role to the response received, but it became especially important when speaking to the participants, whose early belief systems about dancing were often connected to people and situations which prompted a particular point of view. This consideration further solidified the research interest about the notion of an encounter/event/experience as the catalyst or cause for a non-physical relationship to dance.

In an informal research experiment, non-dance related work colleagues and friends were asked, ‘Do you dance?’ and, ‘Tell me a story about you and dance’. The first question elicited reactions that were overwhelmingly ‘*No!*’, from the majority of the respondents. Those who answered differently did so in ways that were also couched in negative language such as *‘only when I’m drunk*’, or ‘*only if forced’*. Their body language showed obvious discomfort with a lack of eye contact, weight shifting, and nervous laughter. They were then asked the second question, which prompted them to recall a memory with dance that could be relayed in story form. Immediately their body language adopted a more relaxed stance, facial expressions changed to smiles and resumed eye contact, and even before the memory was spoken about there was laughter, and a few tears at the remembrance. The stories differed in age and setting, but were usually connected to one or more important people in their lives. One woman recalled watching her grandparents dancing at their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Another mentioned that, despite his abhorrence of disco, he took up disco dance lessons to impress the woman who would later become his wife. And finally, there was the man who became tearful when speaking about dancing with his grandmother who looked after him every day after school.

What these examples, as well as those from the interviews demonstrate, are the ways in which belief systems and memories are constructed and compartmentalised (Schacter and Scarry 2001) to fit certain occasions, but can be modified or unlocked when presented with different types of scenarios. As seen in the differences between what was asked for in the recruitment literature, and the later responses of the participants, the language used to

ask the question provides the context through which the question is answered (Spradley 1979, Skinner 2013). Although the memories are connected to the systems of belief, it seems that there exists some fluidity that can be influenced and selectively recalled based on the social and cultural structures to which there is a connection (Kahneman 2012). Within the memories, the presence of a significant individual seems to have had the greatest influence on their point of view, as well as the social norms that regulate the initial belief systems. In the end, my relative inexperience as an ethnographic researcher may have proved to be an asset, in that it provided a variety of responses from which to not only draw conclusions, but also move forward with further enquiries.

5.4 Physical Relationship

The physical relationships spoken about in the stories were at times difficult to perceive because, to the participants, they became of lesser importance in the story about dance than the overall experience which included dance. Most of the discussion focused on the experiences related to dance, with little conversation about the actual act of dancing. Just as the aspects related to a non-physical relationship were unexpected, so too was the lack of information related to the body and its physicality. This was partially determined by the types of interview questions, in that people were not being asked about the specifics of their chosen dance style and how it was taught, performed, etc. Instead the data revealed aspects related to the body such as touch, weight loss, and physical comfort, rather than referring to it as an agent for/of the practice of dancing. Following Marcel Mauss (1935), and others inspired by him, Grau states, ‘The body is both receptor and generator of social

meanings' (Grau 1995:141). It is the vehicle that both processes and produces meaning, as a result of interactions and encounters with individuals and experiences. That it was seemingly and/or specifically divorced verbally or topically from much of the discussion (to what I considered to be a primarily physically based experience), came as quite a surprise. Instead the cognitive aspects related to the memory based reactions and productions of the experiences were favoured by the participants. While, as stated, this may speak more about the form of questioning I used, it did cause me to be suspect of the participants "true" point of view in regards to the categorisation of dancing as either a physical or social act. As a practical observation, it does occupy both aspects, but where the emphasis is placed by each person divulges important information about what is perceived to be of greatest relevance. As such, what I came away realised was that reasons for participating in dance and dancing were more complex and multi-layered than I had originally hypothesised.

The physical relationship occupies two headings on the chart as it represents multiple areas found within the interviews. In truth, it should occupy a place in all three (Dance/Interpersonal/Intrapersonal) considering that the physical body is the vehicle through which all experience is materialised. This is in recognition of not only dance as an embodied act, but also the role of the embodied self that participates not only in dance, but the world at large. Under the category of dance relationships, it sits in opposition to the non-physical relationship as a means through which divide the active and passive aspects. This is not to discount the acts of viewing or verbally interacting as being non-active, but places it referentially in a location of not being a physical dance

participant. References to the body therefore were more related to the image that each person had of themselves, and concerned areas such as weight loss, body image, and an aging body. Each of these and their mention were more representative of a stereotypical perception of the types of bodies that "should or should not" be dancing, rather than reflecting on their personal experience.

However, Lucy's comments about the use of the body while dancing revealed a sense of honouring that differed from those of the other participants. Her story referred to the body not only as a vehicle for dancing, but also as an embodied entity that serves a purpose beyond a basic movement practice. She is a member of a religious order and describes her dancing as, '*an external expression of my internal experience*'. A practitioner of sacred circle dance, she sees her participation as the means through which she makes her prayers physical. Although she occasionally engages in other dance activities such as folk or contra dances, her commitment to sacred circle dancing, both as a teacher and student, she considers to be a physical or embodied extension of her dedication to spiritual life. She says about her extra-ordinary moment,

Lucy, 69: UK

It was dual – it was because of the whole use of the body, but because of the use of the body, I actually touched something deeper within myself. And I knew – I actually knew at the moment that I prayed the dance.

I think that [dancing], *in very simple terms, it's a total harmony of body, mind, and spirit. Which sounds incredibly grand, and perhaps a little bit pious even. But I think it is a point, when you know that your whole body is giving expression to something that you are aware of both in your mind, and in your inner self. So, that there is a complete wholeness there.*

Although other participants demonstrated movements, throughout the interview Lucy danced. She was often on her feet demonstrating steps and movements, as well as using descriptive language about the use of her body to fully express and elucidate certain points or moments. It was very clear that her perception of her body is as the vehicle for not only dancing, but dancing with and for a specific purpose other than simply the physical pleasure of moving.

5.4.1 Posture and Gesture: A note about interview observations

When watching the videos of the interviews, of relevance was noting the differences in the body language expressed when speaking about dance versus non-dance experiences. For example, the interview started with my asking, 'Begin by sharing some information about your life outside of dance'. Most responses were about employment, marital status, children, etc.

Dean, 60: UK

I'm a chartered engineer by profession, but I worked in various sectors from the Royal Air Force for 16 years, the Civil Aviation Authority, and then the City of London for 16 years on the trading floors.

Kade, 52: USA/UK

My current life outside of dance involves Chi Gong and Tai Chi. I am currently training to teach and I have started to teach Chi Gong in West London and in Milton Keynes. I just finished a teacher training to teach something called Tai Chi Easy, and I will be offering that in the autumn. So, that's my life, that's my work life outside of dance.

As for education, I did my Bachelor's degree at [a large American university]. *It's a bachelor's of science in speech although there is nothing specific about my particular degree. That was the department that the school of speech gave at that point. And I have a post-graduate degree from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, which is a drama school in West London. I am certified by multiple dance teaching organizations from the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, based in London, and the International Dance Teachers Association in Brighton. I'm also a certified Alexander Technique teacher.*

From a physical perspective, the gestures displayed within this section of the interview, as well as other “non-dance” related sections, were very corporeally neutral, with bodies faced forward, the weight of their torso resting on the back of the chair. Their hands were either in their laps or in a position of rest, and overall very few gestures or movements were made. Most of the answers were short in length, leaving only a small window for observation. But their perceived neutrality also corresponded with other sections of the interviews where the topic moved away from the conversation about their dance experiences, and were again about non-dance topics.

In contrast, when speaking about dance, there was a quite pronounced difference seen in body language. The most common changes were alterations in posture, increased rapidity in hand and body gestures as well as in speech patterns. Celine, for instance, sat reclined in her chair with an expression and demeanour that were quite dispirited when referring to generalised details. When she began speaking about dancing, her body straightened and moved forward in her chair, her gestures increased, and the vocal tone and rapidity of her speech changed. When she finished speaking about each dance example, she reclined back into her chair and resumed a more monotone expression and voice. While Celine represents an extreme example, it was one of the first interviews where a noticeable difference in posture and gesture related to dance/non-dance verbalisations occurred.

From that point forward, looking for such markers became an unofficial part of the research process. Rebecca's gestures were also quite pronounced and physically mimicked the statements that she was making verbally. I began to make notes about her gestural correlations,

Rebecca, 30: UK

I don't like to fit into like I don't like to fit into a dance box (pauses and hand 'hops' around making a box like shape)*... I was too fat for gymnastics, and I didn't have the right body shape. I tried it, but I guess I just like that kind of internal space – like going inside* (eyes closed and hand circling heart area again). *And connecting with my body after not wanting to touch it for so long. Knowing now that I have this body…some days are harder than others, I mean some days are really difficult if I'm having a really bad body image, but it's amazing how my body just knows now, and appreciating my body and having a lot of love for it. I never, ever, ever dream of having, and that is consequently helping with my recovery. And I think sometimes it's that mental thing too* (touching head in a circular manner), *because there's always so much going on in my head, with the art, with my life, and dance is a really good way to drop that (hand going down like a guillotine with hand placed on the heart)…and trust that…a lot of the time it's that 'everything's going to be ok'.*

While Rebbeca's gestures were directly related to portions of her story, others felt the need to perform dance movements either seated or standing, often with the expression, *'I cannot tell you, I need to show you'*. Dance anthropologist Deidre Sklar speaks about gestures being the physical manifestation of the verbal representation. She says, 'One feels the meaning of the words, as movement and rhythm, texture, shape, and vitality. The object is made subject' (Sklar, 2001: 187). Through the formation of language, connections are made between mind and body, resulting in an intertwining of verbal and physical cognition. Dance scholar Warren Lamb considers that both postures and gestures need to be "read", just as with any other form of text, in that they provide complementary information and clues of underlying

meaning. He says, '...the language which does not come from the tongue, but from the whole body is, generally speaking, the soul of truth. Movement does not lie…' (Lamb, 1987: 44, see also Lamb 1965). As mentioned above, this is an area that will be explored within a separate study as more specific parameters need to be created for the evaluation of the links between verbalised expressions of dance and their physical counterparts, but its occurrence and the differences between non-dance and dance speech was worth mentioning at this juncture.

5.5 Interpersonal Relationships

The interpersonal relationships spoken about by the participants played some of the most important roles in all aspects of their associations to dance. From the early influences in adolescence to the important teachers and communities formed in adulthood, these contacts with others built lasting inroads with ties that bound the participants to dance in ways which were possibly more important than the dance activity itself. Of all the reasons given as to why decisions were made either for or against dance participation, the influence of another individual was the most prominent. This section will highlight these associations and their importance in the development and sustainment of a system of belief.

Mezirow posits that interactive moments of communication with others serve as the reflective touchstones from which one's interpretations are built, forming circumscribed conceptions based solely upon experiential knowledge. Within transformative learning, meaning schemes and meaning perspectives are often developed in childhood because of interactions with others, and determine the outcomes of the structures of opinions and beliefs that later

dominate one's expectations. When speaking about their experiences it was often these interpersonal involvements that formed the basis of the participants' views, either positive or negative, towards dance and dancing. This included more than just interactions with sole individuals, but involved the internalisation of the views from those within their community associations at large such as churches, schools, and local communities.

5.5.1 Family, Friends, and Close Communities

In their teenage years, the participants most often mentioned individuals who were either directly related to them or who played a role (such as a teacher or friend) in their lives as ones who they remembered having interactions with in regards to dance. As spoken about earlier, some were non-physical and involved situations that were verbal and/or visual types of encounters, while others were a combination of situations that also involved larger social communities and interactions. For example, the stories of Celine and Daniel,

Celine, 32: USA

Celine spoke about, as a very young child, watching her mother rehearse for musical shows put on for and by the military families in their community, and longed to participate as a singer and dancer. But this was not achieved in adolescence as she grew up in a family where stringent religious convictions dominated the household. Her parents did not specifically restrict them from dancing, but it was not encouraged or offered as an extra-curricular activity. As a child Celine attended religious affiliated schools where dance was considered inappropriate, and she later attended a conservative Christian university which did not allow any dancing on campus. It was instilled in her

that the body was something to be feared, and dancing was using the body in such a way that might provoke sinful thoughts or activities. Although the memory of her mother and the part of her that longed to dance stayed with her into adulthood, the dominating perspective was that it might be a betrayal to her community and faith because as she says, '*Good Christian girls didn't dance or move their hips*'.

Similar to statements made by Matthew about feeling like he was '*stuck*' in his cerebral body as a child and adolescent, Celine also expressed this type of frustration because of her membership to her religious community. But her ambivalence was rooted in the imposed convictions of those individuals who were in positions of authority in her life. In her comments, there existed a clear divide between longing she felt as a child, and the fear instilled by the church, as well as the view that the two could not co-exist, and instead must remain separate. Thus, as an adult, she hid her dancing from those connected to her childhood faith-based community for many years. Although she currently remains true to her Christian beliefs, she realised that the joy and confidence that dancing has brought her, is not something to be ashamed of, but rather is an extension of her expression of faith.

A religious community was also a large part of Daniel's upbringing, but in contrast to Celine, dancing was an integral part of their large evangelical church, and from a young age he was encouraged by his mother to participate in the liturgical dance opportunities available to him. He says,

Daniel, 30: UK

My family are heavily involved in the church, so I was brought up in the church. So, I developed a lot with dance that was involved with the church…My mother, and I can say my father as well, they encouraged my dancing, but they were encouraging it more from, keeping it in the church. Just do it in the church.

As he got older he was allowed for a small period to join a few external dance and theatre groups and began to understand that other forms of dance existed outside of a religious context. Already beginning to be aware within himself that he was homosexual, his mother also sensed this and blamed it on his participation in these non-religious groups. Daniel became conflicted between what he felt were his responsibilities to his family and his church, and his desires to dance in ways that were outside of liturgical boundaries. He began to find alternative ways to explore dancing by secretly going to clubs where over time he discovered the Vogue and Vogue Fem communities. As he became more entrenched in his new dance style, he formed connections that were closer to his changing lifestyle and identity, but vastly differed from those of his family and religious communities.

Duck states that, 'Culture and society are systems of meaning that filter into individuals' psyches in very interesting and complicated ways' (Duck 1999: 6). Each aspect provides information and expectations about 'what behaviour is expected' (Ibid: 6). Daniel's story, like Celine's, feature interpersonal relationships of both family and community. In both narratives, there are both implicit and explicit messages about the social codes regarding dance and dancing. Some are dictated through the direct connections to family, while other are expectations as a part of a larger cultural organisation. At times the

two converge creating structures for social norms, as well as strict guidelines for membership. Emerging from these types of highly prescribed communities and philosophies includes a questioning of the social connections built as a result. These associations between the important individuals form structural boundaries through which decisions and experiences, or the lack thereof, are determined, informing the pathways towards or away from dance activities. Like any sort of decision-making, it is the subject of interest that creates the draw, but the eventual choices are made based upon a myriad of factors. The contributing voices to our life experience play an important role in these choices, but can influence either for or against what is internally longing to be expressed.

Both Celine and Daniel were involved in situations where their closest personal and social affiliations justified their early views about the role of dance in their lives. As they grew older they began to question these beliefs, forming an internal conflict between what they and the others around them deemed to be true, and what their interests and internal voices longed to express. No matter the age, this is what Mezirow (1990) points to as the seed of discontent that eventually grows into the potential for transformative learning.

In the process of moving into adulthood, there is a mental and physical emancipation that allows for more autonomous decision making (Freire 1970, Mezirow 2000). Although still important, there develops a lesser dependence upon the opinions and influences of one's immediate family and close community. This is not to say that they do not still hold a position of value and importance in adult lives, but within the process of growth and development

there resides the opportunity to move forward into areas that are more in alignment with their personal goals, rather than those prescribed by their families and friends.

A common response amongst the participants was that their choice to engage with dance and dancing was not only unexpected to them, but also to those closest to them. Within transformative learning, one of the measures of what constitutes a full perspective transformation is the recognition that there has been an alteration of the core sense of self both from the individual themselves, as well as those around them (Taylor and Cranton 2012). Therefore, when designing the interview questions, the inclusion of the reactions from family and friends was very important, especially as the participants described having experienced and made extreme changes in their lives. As new relationships began to develop (to other individuals, to dance and dancing, as well as the altered ways in which they identified/with themselves), I surmised that there might be opinions and reactions to these changes by the people closest to them in their lives prior to discovering dance. As expected, there was a mixture of reactions, and a range of support that varied amongst their social groups.

Some expressed that their friends and families were very supportive of their dance activities, and offered examples without reservation. Darren, for instance, described the reaction of his father, who used to show photographs and videos of him dancing to family and friends at parties and gatherings. This was especially surprising to him as his family was not one who ever encouraged participation in the arts, let alone dance.

Darren, 48: USA

So, my family would tell me that he [Darren's father] *would make them, every Christmas, every holiday, he would make them...Everybody would have to watch this lame video. I mean this was when I was a beginner dancer too. It was VHS. They all had to sit down and watch the same video. He was so proud of me. He thought it was the coolest thing he had ever seen...My sisters...We still make jokes about it all the time. Yeah, he used to make everybody watch the video like I was ten years old or something.*

Kade, amongst others, mentioned that although her family and friends was supportive, it was in a way that was somewhat detached from the dance world to which she had become a part.

Kade, 52: UK/USA

So, my family tend to just let me get on with whatever I'm doing. Their view is - as long as you're happy.

Perry stated that his involvement in dancing was often a topic of conversation at family gatherings, but although he surmises that they are supportive, especially through their enquiries, it is without the understanding of what participating in dance entails, as well as the place and meaning that it holds for him in his life.

Perry, 53: UK

My family have always been, 'Oh I suppose that's what you do'… And the rest of the family just think it's a fun thing… It's always a topic – have you been going dancing? The assumption is that I would have been dancing because it's the only thing that I have time for.

The above examples from Kade and Perry serve as the prevalent attitude expressed by many of the participants about the interest or support showed by family members. On the whole, the responses fell into three distinct categories: fully supportive, supportive but lacking in interest, or a feeling of a

total lack of support. Many initially began to answer the question from a positive tone, but as they continued it was divulged that their family and friends were less supportive than initially portrayed. This was often revealed through the language used with words and phrases such as '*weird', 'unexpected', 'alternative', 'novelty'*, and '*they don't really understand'*.

This final phrase was one that was expressed most often, but was equally used by both those who felt supported and unsupported by their family and friends. Its mention was grounded in what was perceived to be a discrepancy related to having an insider versus outsider perspective (Koutsouba 1999, Stebbins 2000) to their dance communities. In other words, there was an assumption on the part of the participant, that a lack of attendance or physical participation, or, without having first-hand knowledge of '*the dance world'*, resulted in a lack of comprehension. As the dance activity or community occupied a great deal of their time and attention, invitations to dance classes and events were often issued in an effort to bridge the divide. Again, Perry states,

Lots of people have said, 'Oh I would like to try that', and so I say, 'Ok we will go. There are these drop-in classes. You choose the evening and there is a drop-in class we could do. I will go with you. I will be there with you and therefore we can dance this together'. And sometimes that's too full on for someone and I sense that it is too big a hurdle for others. And there are people who come into the community who seem very able, but either don't get the bug, or don't like the fact that they aren't an instant success, and they depart.

Statements such as Perry's and the concept of *'getting the bug'* (or not) were very common amongst the group. However, I found these comments to be contradictory in that they vacillated between the desire to share their passion for dance, and the need for it to be an area of their lives that was separate or

private. Within this need there was a sense of ownership that at times seemed to almost produce a projected response in regards to the opinions of those closest to them. Although, as in Perry's statement, the invitations were genuine, at times the lack of enthusiasm in the elicited responses from the participants could be construed as ones of relief instead of disappointment.

On the other hand, there were those who did express dismay that they were not able to share their passion with those closest to them and became quite emotional. Ralph cried openly as he spoke about the confusing and sometimes negative responses from his mother about dance as a potential profession, even though she often came to see him perform.

Ralph, 25: USA

The whole dancer thing, still to this day kind of once in a while, still makes her uneasy. But to say that my mother wasn't supportive, would be a grave (great) injustice. With my mother, to this day we have arguments about dance and having a life as a dancer, and not as anything else. I knew that it was going to be another battle, I knew that it was not something that I was going to give up, and that's my constant push every time I'm dancing, whenever I'm rehearsing, whenever I'm putting something new together, I have to push through it, even when it gets tough.

Ralph stated that his interest in flamenco was different from the other members of his family who all chose professional careers as lawyers or accountants – no one had ever, as he says '*strayed into the arts*'. Although cognizant of his mother's fears, at the time of the interview he was completing a postgraduate degree in dance and was unsure about the type of life he wanted after its completion. He eventually chose to take a position as a Spanish instructor in a secondary school where he planned to integrate his love of flamenco into the curriculum. Dancing remains his passion and he

practices and performs when possible, but he did not choose to make it his full-time profession. Although he did not directly attribute this choice to his mother and her influence, he intimated that a more “professional” lifestyle would be more readily accepted within his family.

Cedric, who works as an artist and teacher for an integrated dance company, expressed frustration that his wife was not able to understand his dance teaching as a vocation. For him, this choice of employment was out of love, and it did not matter that his income was low and at times sporadic.

Cedric, 54: UK/Ireland

[She] *wishes it brought in more money…but as I say we are working on it. You have to live your life the way you have to live your life. And there are too many voices out there that are saying you have to have the security of money coming in.*

At one time in his life, Cedric studied for the priesthood, and although he made the decision that he would not pursue that vocation, he likens his choice of dance as a profession to that of a calling similar to those who choose a religious life. It is this dedication to dance that finds him in conflict with his wife who thinks that, with two children to support, he should be choosing a more stable profession.

It would be nice and all there, but I know myself and I couldn’t go to the same place every day. I could not do it…I’m 54 for God’s sake. And I know…I’ve tried it! And it just doesn’t sit with me. I’m lucky. Some days I start at one side of London, and by the end of the day I’ve visited three different places and am over at the other side of London. That’s not every day, but I love that change and that variety. And I love people! That’s the other thing too. [She] *is a different personality to me so I try to understand and hear her.*

While the two above examples highlight areas that include aspects both personal and professional, there are others for whom the connection is not necessarily emotional, but includes a drastic deviation from one social group to another. As the dedication to dancing took up more and more of these participants' time, the further divided their social worlds became. The responses to this area of questioning therefore sits firmly in the above-mentioned impression of a lack of understanding from those who are outside of their own dance community.

When making the decision to engage with dance activities, most of the participants moved into situations outside of their immediate social and familial worlds. Even those who were encouraged to attend dance events at the suggestion of a friend or acquaintance soon found themselves in social situations where new associations needed to be formed. The profundity of these relationships and their influence throughout the process, from discovery to novice and beyond, acted as a form of social anchor that eventually grew into what the participants referred to as their *'most important'* friendships, or more commonly, '*my dance family'*. While it is not unusual to place a high value on the friendships gained through participation in common activities (Lawson 2009, Stebbins 2015), there was a depth of commitment that seemed to form quickly after starting to dance, and further deepened as they became more established in their dance groups.

Most of the participants had never trained formally in dance and expressed feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and self-consciousness at the start of what they refer to as their '*dance journey'*. This turned out to be a common experience amongst other adult beginner dancers, and connections were

made with other individuals who were also new to the classes. Together they formed groups that supported each other in their exploration of various dance events and communities. Described as '*safety in numbers'*, these early connections were, for some, temporary place holders serving only as companionship or the human underpinning that helped establish a sense of confidence or stability at the start of their study. Others mentioned that these foundational dance friendships have remained intact and continue to play an important role in their continued dance participation. Carys, Guang, and Taylor all spoke about the people they met in the early days of their training, forming small communities that would travel to dance events together.

Carys, 28: UK

I decided that, because I really liked it, I wanted to get better, so I made some other friends in the class and we, you know, exchanged numbers, and started to text something like, 'are you going to the class on Monday?'…We then, for two or three months continued to go to the Monday class, and then chose together to go to a social. We sort of made a plan and went, which was really nice. I think it was on the Southbank, and it was a beginner's social which was really important…There was maybe three or four of us? And even now I want to go with someone, but it's not as important.

Guang, 45: USA

I was one among several people who just took everything! We would go and try tap, we would try Flamenco. If a Hula class came, we tried Hula. If it was popping, break dance…whatever, all of us would sign up and take the intro classes…I tried them all [genres of dance] and it became this thing that a select group of people, I think there were eight or nine of us doing that…and we just started to really embrace the idea that everything was cool, in that school, that we wanted to try.

Taylor, 70: UK

I did meet some people who I got to know…and we exchanged e-mails, which was the beginning of using e-mails for me. And we started what we called it in those days - The Tango Gang. And this was a gang of people, about a dozen people, who started at the same time. We used to e-mail each other. And then eventually, I started to take control of it, to send news about what was happening on the tango scene. Now I've got a few hundred people who belong to that.

No matter the status going forward, what these early associations provided was a level of comfort that aided their early forays into dance activities. Throughout the stories these types of personal connections, no matter the skill level or numbers of years as a dancer, were always mentioned as having a vital role. For some, there was a clear pattern of what I perceived to be a form of "hand-to-hand" chronicle of people/dance situations. Meaning that for every step along the way, there was also a mention of an influential person or group. I say hand-to-hand because each situation seemed as if there was both a literal and metaphorical hand holding that continued until the next level of participation, and consequently the next important individual, was realised. For example, the earlier accounting by Jackie where she refers to being '*scooped up'* by a friend and taken to a dance class. This led to a meeting with a ballroom dance teacher who not only introduced her to the same sex dance community, but later became her business partner hosting dance events. As a result of his influence Jackie also became active in same sex ballroom dance competitions, and at one such event met the woman who would become both her life and dance partner. When reviewing Jackie's interview, what stood out were the direct associations between specific individuals and what she considered to be important reference points in the

narrative. For her there was a clear trajectory of events that always included the mention of a specific individual.

References to synchronicity were again mentioned when speaking about what were perceived to be person centred encounters. Like Jackie, Nora met the director of a dance company who invited her to come and take classes at her studio. When Nora progressed past the technique level being taught, she had another “chance” meeting which led her to the next level of teaching, and then another meeting from which she progressed to university. In her interview, she related each of them as being synchronistic in nature because none of the individuals knew each other, and each appeared at the right timing that Nora needed to move forward. To her, each opportunity was spoken about as if they were almost divinely inspired, rather than simply meeting the right person at the right time. Also interesting about these associations, was the level of responsibility bestowed upon the individual who connected the participant to the dance activity. There is a meaningful attribution that goes beyond a simple meeting, and are instead looked upon as a sign or further confirmation that they were on the correct path.

Others referred to individuals in teaching or directorship positions who, through their inspiration, kindness and encouragement, were credited as the reason for their continuation with dance. Delia says about her first dance teacher,

Delia, 59: USA

[She] *was warming us up one day, and we were on our knees, we were doing floor work, and she did a movement…I remember the movement well… There was a look in her eye, and I knew then, I was nineteen, that I wanted that. I wanted to feel what she felt.*

Guang chose to attend a hip-hop dance class after being inspired by the movements he saw in music videos and movies. Although he had participated in martial arts, he had never taken a dance class before and knew nothing about the class procedure or technique. He claims that he was the oldest student by twenty years and was *'probably the worst student this teacher had ever seen'*. He says about this first class and the instructor,

Guang, 45: USA

He [the teacher] *was very encouraging and… I think she made it seem possible to go in there and not do well. Definitely on my first day I wasn't doing well. She didn't make me feel in any way shape or form that I was wrong, or that it was going to be an issue. And once I knew that, it was like, ok fine, I'll just keep coming back. Luckily during this time that I started coming back…And I think my dance philosophy started to form… She* [the teacher] *would say that dance is for everybody. And a lot of people say that, but they don't really mean it…* [and] *I told some of the instructors* [at the school] *this… It's really easy to get enamoured by your talented students, but you should be just as happy when you have an awkward student that never improves but still comes to you every week. That's just as special, if not more.*

These types of interpersonal relationships were spoken about in almost reverential terms with language like that which was used to describe an extraordinary encounter. It is in these types of situations where I contend that, for the participants, the personal relationships are as important as their involvement with dance. Although the passion professed for the act of dancing is believed to be genuine, these hand-to-hand links also served as initiators throughout the learning process, contributing to the alteration of attitudes and systems of belief about dance.

Chapter five was a presentation of the types of relationships or connections present in the participant's stories. Highlighted were those associated with the non-physical encounters and memories from which beliefs about dance and dancing emerged. Also discussed were the developments of alterations of social worlds, as well as the reactions and responses from family and friends in regards to their diversion into dance activities. Most important to this discussion were the ways in which these encounters and associations contributed to the development of their belief systems. Revealed in the data were multiple types of relationships, all of which play an important role in the process of engaging, or not, in dance events and activities. Chapter six builds on this as it relates to perspectives and perceptions. Featured are the discussions about amateur versus professional status as related to issues of identity, hallmarks of a perspective transformation, and the notion of who can be called or what constitutes a "real" dancer.

Chapter Six - Perspectives and Perceptions: Determining a 'Real' Dancer

6.1 Perspectives and Perceptions

The theme of perspectives and perceptions falls into several different areas found throughout the interviews. What the prior discussions related to encounters and relationships provided were the foundations for the construction and eventual alteration of systems of belief in regards to dance and dancing. Just as they were produced because of personal and social influences, so also were perspectives and perceptions. Although many possibilities were presented as potential themes and topics, those related to aspects of identity and ownership were the most prevalent. Therefore, this chapter will focus on issues related to perspective transformations as they pertain to what it means to be a "dancer".

6.2 Perspective Transformation

The attainment of a complete perspective transformation is the desired outcome of the process of transformative learning (Mezirow 1991, Taylor and Cranton 2012). It is a process of questioning past perceptions, and the alteration of personal and social perspectives, that is thought to be the pinnacle of constructing new meaning, serving as evidence that transformative learning has taken place. Mezirow states,

> Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings.
>
> (Mezirow 1990: 14)

Through reflecting on long-held beliefs, a critical assessment is triggered in order to generate new knowledge of past to present differences. Educationalist Elizabeth Saavedra suggests that this type of 'action, acting upon redefinitions of our perspectives, is the clearest indication of a transformation' (Saavedra 1995: 373). The process includes the complete alteration of past assumptions, or the reversal of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Mezirow suggests that for this to take place, there needs to be an awareness of types of distortions that might alter one's judgement and decision making capabilities (Mezirow 1990). Clark posits that there are multiple identifiers of a perspective transformation such as 'psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioural (changes in lifestyle)' (Clark 1991 in Taylor 2000: 297). This corresponds with Cranton's (2012) assertion that transformation has been achieved when it is recognised, both internally and externally, by oneself as well as others. Taylor posits that both the process and the outcome of a change in perspective is unique to each person, and therefore defining specific parameters is a difficult task (Cranton 2012). The responses from the participants are reflective of this characterisation, and differentiate widely in their context, conception, and perception of what

constitutes a transformation. For some it is a reversal in regards to their physical participation in dance and dancing. For others, it was associated with unrelated internal belief systems related to identity and connection to self that changed because of their dance participation. Taylor asks, ‘How does a perspective transformation manifest itself such that participants act on their lives differently?’ and ‘What does a perspective transformation look like behaviourally’ (Taylor 2000: 298). Although these questions are subjective and are nebulous enough to encompass a multitude of scenarios, they act as a starting place from which to consider tangible evidence. To begin this process, they will be used, in combination with the three areas mentioned by Clark, to analyse the story of Deklen.

Deklen, 40: Germany/Italy

‘*So this is the story of tango and the effects on myself and my apartment.’*

At the time of the interview Deklen had been dancing tango for five years. As mentioned in Chapter two, prior to his discovery, he had ended a long-term partnership and was struggling with that and other changes in his personal life; he had moved to a new country, did not speak the language, and had very few friends. One evening after a party, he happened upon a tango club, and as an amateur photographer, returned several times a week for the next year to photograph the dancers. During this period, he had no interest in the dance form, preferring to enjoy the music, atmosphere, and observing the dancers. Eventually he was invited by a friend for tango lessons, and he agreed thinking it might be interesting to experience what he had been

watching and photographing. But never having been a dancer, or any interest in dancing, he did not think it would lead to anything meaningful.

As I told you, really really nothing. Like I was not able to move my body in the presence of other people… But I was not really the kind of guy who could start moving to any rhythm if it came on – before tango.

After a few lessons, he said he felt that the dance had become,

…like a seed that was growing inside, and then you just want more and more and more. And this also covered the changing of the personality, because it was really feeling a different atmosphere, a different relation with people.

At the time, he was working as a medical physicist where after a few months of dancing, he began to notice the differences between the two worlds.

I was coming from work [to tango class]*…where people barely shake the hands at the end of the day.*

As his dancing improved, so did his psychological state,

As I mentioned in the beginning, I went through a little bit of depression when I separated from my girlfriend…I even started psychoanalysis…because I was just not feeling well enough and not good with myself…I had to talk, I had to explain about everything…But then I realised that the only moment that I was really feeling good was when I was dancing. Embracing another person in the candlelight and the soft atmosphere, and of course the passion and sensuality of the tango music.…I was listening to Piazolla even before I went to Argentina. Something this music was existing already inside of me. What I was feeling with tango was just feeling good. It was happy about just going dancing. And even if with a sport, like swimming, or kickboxing, or running, or whatever, it was just, I don't want to do this activity it I take time off from tango. Like every hour that I had, I wanted to dedicate to tango. I was so much stronger, the feeling that it was giving to me, that I got addicted – is probably the word to use.

His '*addiction*' caused him to travel to Argentina where he studied intensively. When he returned home, he realised that his apartment was large enough to host tango events. Over the next two years he began to spend more time producing tango evenings, and even removed several walls to create a larger

dance floor. He eventually left his university position and now pursues tango and photography full-time. When asked why he chose such a drastic life alteration he stated,

…it [tango] *was healing, really a healing process. I mean when I really think about…sometimes I think about why I am doing what I am doing…Why am I quitting fifteen years of research, and physics, and medical physics? It was my goal in life to always heal people. Like in the institute of cancer research, diabetes research, muscular disease. Just trying to apply all my knowledge, all my skills, all my energy that could give benefit to people…And now I realize that I am probably doing better with tango. And I benefit myself, which is also important to me. I really feel that…for sure I really feel the healing power of tango.*

Once I even compared tango with a sort of religion. It's a…it could be said ironically, but it really is a form of power on people, and I really believe, that every time I have a problem, and I still do have a lot of problems, every time I don't feel good or every time I need some help, even physically you don't feel well, the only thing I do is to go and dance tango. And this really gives me extra energy, extra medicine. It just, I don't know, it's one of those things probably one who does like know that you can only live one week in your life and what would you do? And I would still say. 'dance tango'. I would not do anything else.

At the time of the interview Deklen had not ruled out returning to medical physics, and even sent me a message the day after the interview checking that his identity would be protected. He was concerned that those in his former profession would not understand his choices, and they might be seen as unprofessional or lacking in depth. Deklen continued to hold dance events in his home for two years before temporarily closing the salon to focus on some photography assignments. But he recently posted online that he would be resuming his popular dance evenings again.

Found in Deklen's story are the elements Clark proposes which signify a perspective transformation. Although he was already working with a therapist because of the changes in his life, he claims that his participation in dancing tango allowed him to extend the process and release past difficulties. The

notion that, when dancing, all of one's focus is on the dance giving an ability to let go of internalised issues or worries, was spoken about by many of the participants, but Deklen's description signifies his use of dance to place himself within a more grounded psychological state. From establishing physical connections with others, to recovering a renewed self-relationship, as he says, he experienced a type of healing that took place on levels both mental and physical. Although his admittance of dancing having become an '*addiction*' could be perceived as an unhealthy attachment, in his case, it served a purpose of moving him out of a circumstance where he was unhappy both personally and professionally, and into a lifestyle that he affirms is nurturing his mind, body, and spirit. It is interesting to note that Deklen's reference to his dance experience as '*healing*' parallels his prior life goals of providing similar opportunities to others. Although he left his medical research position, which presented a more literal concept of a healing activity to the outside world, Deklen's interpretation of tango as containing similar affective properties allowed his core sense of value related to helping others, to remain intact.

Deklen was one who professed very strongly that he had had no physical association to dance as an adolescent. He expresses in a remark quoted above, his discomfort at '*moving his body in front of others*'. Like other participants, he did engage in other physical activities, and attributed his martial arts training as a tool that aided him in his early tango lessons.

I never thought about dancing because before I was kind of nerd guy in a lab, and my experience with movement was always clumsy and even when I was dancing with friends, like dancing in a club or something, I was always one of those guys who was sitting at the bar and drinking and not even trying to move. And, so I was not really thinking…I would like to start to dance.

As a male growing up in Italy, he voiced that within his family, it was not acceptable for a male to engage with dance. This resulted in the feelings of discomfort in both of his above statements, as well as what he described as being '*unconnected*' to his body. Although he articulated an uneasiness about dance or the notion of dancing amongst friends, the use of his body in martial arts practice seemed to cause him no discomfort or the feeling of being disconnected to his physical self. Anthropologists Noel Dyck and Eduardo Archetti (2003) reflect that there are similarities, both physically and emotionally, between dance and athletics. However, they comment that, 'Sport and dance are conventionally viewed in the West as residing within separate and even opposed cultural realms' (Archetti and Dyck 2003: 1, see also Niemenin 1998). Therefore, Deklen's preconceptions about dance and dancing at times seem to indicate that they were more inclined towards those that were social rather than physically influenced.

Clark's first qualification of experiencing a change in one's understanding is classified as a revision of the perception of the psychological self. Although Deklen clearly states that his psychological health was both altered and improved after discovering tango, I argue that this perceptual revaluation occurred in combination with a renewed connection with his physical self. In a later article, Clark, when referring to an experience of transformative learning through her physical body, refers to this type of interwoven awareness as 'embodied knowing' (Clark 2012: 426) and argues that 'we also know in and through our bodies' (ibid: 426) with our physical selves providing as much information in the development of self-awareness as cognitive processing

(See also Hannaford 1995, David 2015). The use of Deklen's body as the core vehicle for learning and expression while experiencing tango engaged the 'kinaesthetic sense' (Stinson 1995: 44, Sklar 2000), connecting the internal and external selves which, 'both tells us about ourselves, and connects us to others as embodied selves' (ibid). Other scholars refer to this as a type of 'whole person learning' (Stinson 1995, Taylor 1997, Nagata 2009) which goes beyond just the mind and body, and utilises the 'awareness of use of all the functions we have available for knowing…' (Taylor 1997:49).

During the year spent photographing the dancers in the tango club, and as he became more a part of the community, Deklen found that his discomfort with his body was connected to his belief that he could not dance. Although opportunities arose for him to participate he always refused. It was only at the encouragement of his friend that found the courage to begin attending classes.

At the beginning, it was really, really slow… I was taking this class once every two weeks. Then maybe once a week. Then maybe for weeks and months I was not doing anything. Then I was getting back in touch with these people. I was very slow because I never really believed I could…never really thought I could dance at the level at the people who were at the milonga. So, at the beginning, as I said, it was really to more to filling up the big space, the big emptiness that was in my private life…and social life.

And the guy was like 'Oh yeah you can stay in the class. You are not bad; you are not doing bad to be a total new dancer. So, then I was motivated and I continued with him. And then little by little, once I went to a milonga, it was my first milonga I went. And I realized that I knew a lot of people because all of them I had met through this year that I was actually hanging out with them, without going to dance. So, when I was there everyone was like 'Oh finally Deklen is at a milonga'. And they were hugging and kissing, and so on.

I would argue that Deklen's eventual alteration of his belief system was both convictional, as Clark suggests, and communal. A primary motivator and his subsequent perseverance was fuelled by the invitation and integration into the community to which he had previously occupied a self-restricted position. As he became more integrated with the dancing side of the tango collective, he began to slowly expand his awareness and acceptance of the changes occurring in his life. In this sense Deklen's story differs from some of the other participants in that he already held a peripheral role in the local tango scene prior to his embarking upon learning the dance. Therefore, his risk factor related to integrating as a dancer was lowered because his identity as a tango dance photographer had already been established. As he states above, when he attended his first milonga, his friends were overjoyed at the discovery that he had finally decided to join in the actual dancing of tango, which only further encouraged him towards continuing his study.

Deklen refers to the physical connections between dancers as one of the most important elements for producing what he perceives to be the healing effects experienced through tango. The close hold and intimate proximity between the dancers is a hallmark of the style, as well as the correlation between the leaders hand and its role in the directive of the dance. The independence, yet interdependency between the partnered dancers produces what educationalist Pamela Meyer refers to as the 'embodied relational' (Meyer 2009:57), which focuses on experiences where individuals are co-creators of learning, providing both subjective and objective channels for the exchange of information. Meyer states,

> The shared success of the collaboration eclipses individual self-consciousness, interest, and centeredness. Inviting attunement to the "whatness" of the experience is a key dimension of the shift from self-consciousness to self and other awareness.
>
> (Meyer 2009:57)

Deklen contends that it is the combined physical and community connections that have had an impact and influence on his overall life (re)evaluation and lifestyle changes. Both aspects have played a role in his desire for further collaboration which is demonstrated in the creation of his own tango studio. This indicates that his commitment is not only to the dance form, but to the people who participate in his classes and dance events. Raymond et.al comment on the power of such commitments referring to them as those which provide a sense of 'belongingness, rootedness, and familiarity' (Raymond et. al 2010: 423). They construct what they refer to as a 'place of attachment' (Ibid: 422) that bridges the gaps of both the psychological and environmental. For Deklen, it is the triad of the physical, communal, and spatial circumstances that contributed to his behavioural conversions, which included leaving medical research to pursue his artistic endeavours full-time.

Taylor's two questions, 'How does a perspective transformation manifest itself such that participants act on their lives differently?' and 'What does a perspective transformation look like behaviourally' (Taylor 2000: 298), require observations that include obvious changes, as well as subtler representations that lie outside of people, place, and things. For some, these alterations are extreme with major personal and/or professional modifications. Kegan suggests that different types of transformative experiences foster different types of alterations. 'Some alter our very being, our beliefs, and our core

sense of self – the core theme by which we live and move and define our being' (Kegan 2009: 35). Others simply 'transpose' (Tisdale 2012: 22) one's life, allowing for deeper learning and perspectives, but offering no significant change. Deklen not only left his career as a medical researcher, he also modified his personal living space, and his primary social groups, as well as his overall understanding of himself. He confronted long held opinions and assumptions, both personally and culturally, about dance, dancers, and dancing, and embraced his new lifestyle in such a way that it seemed to leave behind past understandings and belief systems.

Deklen's story, therefore, represents the fundamentals of a perspective transformation as proposed by Mezirow. Clark's suggestion of the triple phases of psychological, convictional, and behavioural, coupled with Taylor's questions, provide an elemental structure that highlight three key concepts based upon Mezirow's proposition of a total modification of past systems of belief. Each of these qualifications and questions can be applied to the participant's stories in some form, yielding patterns that pertained to group as a whole.

6.3 Questioning Perspective Transformation

The research in this thesis is based upon the premise of the claims by the participants that they experienced a complete perspective transformation in regards to their physical participation and internal belief systems about dance. As seen in the above story of Deklen, the elements that support these claims revolve around recognisable alterations both on the part of the individual, as well as those around him. Each of the participant's stories contain aspects that on the surface were in line with the concept of a perspective

transformation, but when examined further, disclosed discrepancies in the assertion of a complete reversal of/to their previously held belief systems in regards to dance. This was especially evidenced in the language used to talk about dance/dancers/dancing, which once again brought to the forefront the differences in the considerations of 1) how dance is classified, 2) the development of a cultural hierarchy between art and social dance forms, and 3) the divisions in regards to who are seen to be dancers. It also raised questions regarding the embedding of long held personal and social beliefs and whether or not such attitudes and systems can fully be altered as a result of significant experiences. It is recognised that this is a multi-faceted topic that will not be easily analysed or settled in this discussion, but the conflict between who and what a dancer "is" played a large role in the discussions with the participants. Their subjective points of view reveal objective influences constructed over time because of both internal and external factors.

6.4 "Real" Dance/Dancers

One of the largest (mis)perceptions spoken about in the interviews was the impression of what constitutes a 'real' dancer. This term, as used by the participants, is done so in a way that reveals a lack of faith in the authenticity of their own engagement, as well as the status of their dance based identity. Antonyms to the word "real" include such words as 'dishonest, fake, false, feigned, imaginary, invalid, untrue'.[93] While some of these are extreme in their connotation, it points to a questioning of place or status, as well as a perception of what constitutes being a dancer, creating not only negative

[93] http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/real?s=t: (Accessed 20 January, 2016)

impressions, but distinct dividing lines between types of dancers and dance communities. It also underlies the impression by many of the participants that there are boundaries that cannot, for a variety of circumstances, ever be crossed. Most commonly these include perspectives regarding age, length and level of training, physical ability, and dance as a profession. The discussion will begin with the most common reference to this perception of real/not – that of professional versus non-professional/amateur.

6.4.1 Professional/Amateur

In *The Hidden Musicians* (1989), mentioned in the introduction, Finnegan speaks about the differences between the ways in which amateur musicians are compared to those who occupy a professional status. She posits,

> The term 'professional'…at first appears unambiguous. A 'professional' musician earns his or her living by working full time in some musical role, in contrast to 'amateur', who does it 'for love' and whose source of livelihood lies elsewhere. But complications arise as soon as one tries to apply this to actual cases on the ground. Some lie in ambiguities in the concept of 'earning one's living', others in differing interpretations about what is meant by working in 'music', and others again – perhaps most powerful of all – in the emotive overtones of the term 'professional' as used by the participants themselves.
>
> (Finnegan 1989: 13)

Although Finnegan is referring to her study of musicians, and this research focuses on dancers, the implication of the comments above could easily be applied to any of the arts disciplines (Dewey 1939, Redfern 1983, Sparshott 1995, Bosse 2015). There seems to be a misnomer that one who is considered a professional not only receives payment for their participation, but also is deserving of more respect and/or recognition than those who consider themselves as amateurs. Again, Finnegan states, '…neither payment nor

amount of time provides an unambiguous basis for differentiating 'professionals' from 'amateurs'; the difference is at best only a relative one' (Finnegan 1989: 14). She goes on to qualify that although the focus of her research is on those considered amateurs, the boundaries between the two are too nebulous for her to draw a clear division, and the receipt of financial compensation may have little to do with the final understanding on the subject. As such, her decision became one where she referred to all participants as 'musicians', and considered instead the variations in their status on a case by case basis, and across a self-created spectrum. Finnegan acknowledges that the merging of all the participants under this one heading was potentially problematic, but it produced a common baseline from which she could create a form of assessment. The more pronounced discrepancy came from the musicians themselves who interpreted the terminology (musician/professional/amateur) from a perspective that was applied to the 'evaluative rather than economic aspects' (ibid: 15).

Finnegan's work sheds light on the passages from the participant's stories that speak to the types of evaluative qualifiers placed on both themselves, and their engagement with dance. She proposes that those who participate in music can also be referred to as musicians, just as those who participate in dance can be viewed as dancers; the only classification being where they fall along a continuum related to their type of experience. Considering this conceptually from this point of view leaves ample space for situational interpretations. The use of the word "dancer" or "musician", in this context, acts as a generalised label for one who participates in their chosen activity. For example, I am often referred to by my friends as a baker given my

enjoyment of that activity. I am happy to accept that title given my 'hobbyist'[94] (Stebbins, 1982) status. But I would protest if they added on the word "master" or "professional" to the title. That additional identifier would suggest that I have a high level of training that would set me above that of a basic participant. Should the notion then, of being deserving of the generic title (dancer, musician, baker, etc.) be dependent upon its receipt from others? Or is it better determined by the individual themselves? It is reasonable to expect that if a person states they are a dancer it indicates in some way that they are a participant in dance, but also that a certain level of acceptance with the use or application of that identifier has been reached. To reject the use of that title does not mean that one does not physically engage with dancing, but denotes that there is an alternate understanding as to what its use might mean.

Lawson raises this issue in her study about adult amateur tap dancers. As a member of the class, and one who professed great joy within her participation, she also felt at times to be an imposter in the larger world of dance, and questioned the 'legitimacy' of both her and amateur placement within dance culture. She asks,

> Can a dancer be a dancer without skill or appropriate body type?...How much can the dancer rely on amateur status to confer a license or excuse for the illegitimacy of not meeting professional standards?
>
> (Lawson 2009: 4)

[94] A hobby is defined by Stebbins as, 'a specialised pursuit beyond one's occupation, a pursuit one finds interesting and enjoys doing because of its durable benefits'. (Stebbins 1982: 260). Although hobbyists also occupy many of the attributes found within the realm of the amateur, especially in terms of dedication of time and effort, they are more often attracted to what they consider to be the ways in which the chosen activity offers forms of gratification that are unique to each individual.

But who or what has the agency to determine such legitimacy? Lawson refers to sociologist Howard S. Becker and his discussion on the topic of hierarchy and the arts (1982) when she argues,

> …dance as "art" has been given a socially constructed reality within the individual society where it is performed and only certain people in this society are given the right to define, classify, and rate its goodness.
>
> (Lawson 2009: 4)

These two references support the idea of how and why this impression of "realness" is perceived by the participants. The first refers to a dancer's skill set, as well as the type of physique that is meant to be representative of a 'dancer's body'. The second makes a point of referring to the 'socially constructed reality' which she posits actively contributes to the determination of such perceptions. Sociologist Peter Berger, when considering this concept and its influence on everyday life, asked questions about the differences between 'reality' and 'knowledge' (Berger 1966: 14). He suggested that each of these have the possibility to be grounded in fact, but are more concerned with the 'specific social contexts' (ibid: 15) in which they are placed. While this is not the proper context for an extended review of the development of the philosophy of knowledge, Berger's reference leads into a more sociological perspective which contends that it is the interpretation of knowledge that 'guides conduct in everyday life' (ibid: 33). Similar in thinking to Mezirow's position on social interaction and reflection, Berger also suggests that our knowledge and sense of reality are shaped as a result of these points of encounter and communication. Such interactions also contribute to the development of an 'imposter syndrome' (Nuereiter and Traut-Mattausch 2016:

1), which is defined as, ‘an internal experience of intellectual and professional incapability despite objective evidence to the contrary’ (ibid). In other words, it is an unfounded fear, outside of the boundaries of reality, where the sufferer believes that their abilities are inferior and might be discovered. But what constitutes this notion of reality or legitimacy, and under what circumstances are they constructed? The earlier statement from Becker parallels the trends mentioned in the introduction about the representation of certain types of dance and dancers in oral history collections. Is it this narrowly viewed presentation of dance within media and popular culture that contributes to the viewpoint of the amateur as being what film maker and narratologist Broderick Fox refers to as a ‘dirty word, rather than one laden with power and possibilities’ (Fox, 2004: 5)? He continues,

> …ask someone for a concrete definition and rarely do they respond with an answer of what amateurism *is,* constructing a meaning, instead, in terms of what it is *not* – not sophisticated, not technically adept, not pretty or polished, not of popular interest, or perhaps, most frequently and opaquely, “not professional”.
>
> (Fox, 2004: 5)

Dodds attributes this type of discrepancy to the placement of value on what are considered to be high versus low art forms. She uses the term ‘body of value’ (Dodds 2011: 98) to describe what she posits,

> …signals intellectual worth, economic exchange, and taste preference, and measures of aesthetic discrimination. Yet the popular dance body has been culturally and intellectually subject to elitist judgements that position it as marginal, low, frivolous and lacking in worth.
>
> (Dodds 2011: 98)

Although in this quote Dodds is referring to the placement and privilege of dance forms within a social and educational framework of meaning, I make use of her term ‘body of value’ here for two purposes: firstly, to highlight what she refers to as ‘intellectual worth’, and secondly, the perceived position of popular or amateur dance as occupying a place that is ‘marginal, low, and lacking in worth’. These phrases and the meaning behind them underline the perceptions from the participants when they contend that they are not ‘real’ dancers. They reflect the series of antonyms referenced earlier that are intimated as being the place in dance they profess to occupy. Lawson, when referring to similar sentiments from her classmates, says, ‘To be “a dancer” is to belong to a special group’ (Lawson 2009:11), and depending on the inference, this statement could be perceived from a variety of points of view. For Lawson as well as the participants in my research, it is contextually grounded in the ‘real dancer’ as “other than”, at a higher level, or more deserving level of recognition. As will be seen in the responses from the interviews, there are differing opinions in their interpretations.

Stebbins responds to the amateur/professional debate by clearly delineating that professionals are those who earn the totality of their livelihood through their chosen occupation, and all others occupy a place on his scale of leisure activities. But, an amateur who engages to the point of a ‘career’ is one who is seen as being closest to those of a professional in both skill and dedication, albeit without the financial compensation. His or her participation is guided by desire and the acquisition of a high level of skills. In terms of level of commitment, the two are often related, either through training or within specific organisations, with those who have made the activity their paid

profession. It is this type of commitment, both active and economic, which ethnomusicologist Antoine Hennion refers to as marking the 'return of the amateur' (Hennion 1996: 116). His use of this term refers to what he considers to be the often-overlooked power position held by those of an amateur status. Both he and Lawson (2009) cite the amateurs' position as 'consumers of' as holding an influential and important place in determining social trends and tastes. Hennion states, '…the professional is no longer in the service of a community…but finds himself, like it or not, in the service of a market composed of an immense majority of amateurs…' (ibid: 117).

Stebbins concurs with the opinions of Lawson and Hennion and posits that amateurs and professionals are inter-connected and reliant upon each other, as well as the general public for their survival. His interpretation of this is referred to as 'P-A-P', or 'professional-amateur-public', which is described as, 'a system of functionally interdependent relationships, and institutional location that is both cause and effect of their serious committed orientation toward the activity in question' (Stebbins 1982: 258). An example from the interviews would be the Pro/Am West Coast swing partnership between Laina and her teacher and professional dance partner. She is an amateur dancer who pays her teacher for private lessons, to choreograph their routines, and act as her dance partner (also paid) in various dance competitions. Although she also dances with an amateur partner, her preference is to do as much as possible with the professional, and estimates that she competes with him between twelve to fifteen times per year. Her professional partner's participation not only benefits him financially, but through the competitions

with his student he is also presenting himself and his skills to a larger public audience. Laina comments,

Laina, 40: USA

I do more now that I have a choreography routine with a professional teacher – so the Pro/Am…I have to pay him for it, like every second of practice and every performance. But he [her professional partner] *is a fucking champion. He is like, one of the top guys and he's doing a routine with me…I picked the song, and he choreographed it...It is beautiful…It's so one of my most thrilling experiences…every single time that I watch one of our videos of us competing the routine, I get to the end and I have this huge smile on my face. It is such an honour. So now that I have this routine, there's an incentive to go to more events, so that I can compete this routine.*

Laina, who is an example of a career level amateur West Coast swing dancer, is thus 'guided by standards of excellence' (Stebbins 1982: 259) in both her choice of a partner as well as the types of competitions she/they enter. As a result of their participation in the Professional-Amateur-Public, both Laina and her partner consciously enact their own pre-conceived notions of cause and effect, resulting in personal, social, or professional benefits.

This proved to be the same for those who pursued the business side of dance as studio owner/operators. Kade and Dean fall in to this category - both danced for many years before choosing to open their dance schools. Kade reached a professional level of competency as a dancer, but chose to focus on teaching dance to others. Dean trained as a pilot in the Royal Air Force and then changed to a career as a stock trader. He and his wife began to ballroom dance together in their early fifties, and after a few years he arranged for a voluntary redundancy to establish and co-own a ballroom dance business.

What they both have in common is equating the title of “dancer” with those who have reached a professional level, and that includes the ability to take on paid professional performance engagements. They comment,

Kade, 53: USA/UK

No. Not really. I wasn’t really a professional dancer. I was never a professional dancer, in terms of performing. So as a job title, no. No. People ask me about that (pause) I don’t know that I’m…There was a time when I was in my teens and I would go into a dance studio, like to a jazz class for fun, and I would think, ‘I’m a dancer. I’m a dancer!’ I’m not that person anymore…So no, I don’t think of myself as a dancer.

Dean, 60: UK

No. No…I enjoy dancing. Although people refer to me as a dancer when I go for my six-monthly check-up at the dentist. They say, ‘Oh here’s David the dancer!’. I go for beer calls with my friends from the bank and they call me a dancer, but I’m not really. When I look at [his teacher and partner in the dance school], *she’s been at it all her life, and the other part time teachers as well. If I had started [dancing] when I was young and done competitions and the like, but it’s a bit late in the day now for me.*

It is interesting to note that both of their answers mention the notion of ‘*fun’* or ‘*enjoyment*’, but differ contextually and seem to imply that this is devoid from the experience of being a professional in the field. Kade’s memory as a young person where she identifies herself as a dancer is one where she can have fun and simply enjoy the experience. Dean’s response is similar, but he answers that he is *not* a dancer *because* of his enjoyment. Both answers suggest that their view of professional dancers (those to which Dean attributes the use of the title), is one that revolves around dance as work. Psychologists Antonella Delle Fave and Fausto Massimini, in their research on flow as experienced by professional or amateur dancers, differentiate between the two by classifying them as either something done every day as

work, or a leisure activity pursued a few hours each week (Fave and Massimini 1992: 210). In her essay *Amateur versus Professional* (1965) filmmaker Maya Deren referred to the Latin origins of the word amateur as one who is active 'for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons or necessity' (Deren 1965: 45). She implied that if one takes up something as their profession, it is less enjoyable than the activities pursued outside of work commitments. This implication is somewhat in alignment with the aspects of Kade and Dean's interviews where both commented that although they do enjoy their dance professions, it contains aspects that are very different than being simply a dance participant.

The topic of professionalism was again spoken about by several participants who did not think of themselves as a dancer until they had acquired considerable professional or performing experience. Darren is a contemporary wheelchair dancer who choreographs, teaches, and performs with both his and other similar companies. In his interview, he spoke at length about his successes, but even as these grew, his confidence, especially amongst others he considers dancers, waivered. It was only when he was invited to be a guest performer with the premier wheelchair company in the United States that he finally felt ready to accept the title of being a dancer.

Darren, 46: USA

Oh yeah. For sure…So, I would say, a few years ago – three or four years ago, when a [prominent American wheelchair dance company] *wanted me to come the first time, and Karen Peterson in Miami wanted me to come, and people were asking me to perform here and there, I was like, 'Ok, I'm a dancer'…I don't really have the...that's kind of been the struggle for me, because everything for me mostly has been choreography...because I didn't take any dance training growing up.*

Interestingly, many participants mentioned being referred to as a dancer by family, friends and acquaintances – whether or not they accepted the title themselves. As seen above, Dean spoke about others calling him, ‘Dean the Dancer’. Veronica also spoke about co-workers who knew that she was an active participant in dance, and as such, conferred the title of “dancer” upon her. Although these individuals are not able to substantiate the participant’s roles as dancers, because of their place outside of their dance communities, this returns to the insider/outsider dichotomy about who or what determines this identity. But there are also differences of opinion amongst dancers themselves. Abram recalls a visit to a university dance department where he had the following conversation with the head of the department.

Abram, 63: UK

I'll tell you something that [a professional contemporary dance colleague] *said. When teaching one of her classes, I met her earlier and we went up to the common room to have a coffee and a chat, and she introduced me to somebody from the music department. And she actually introduced me as a real dancer. She said, 'I actually feel like I'm playing at this, but this is the real thing* [referring to Morris dance]*'. So, there is that sense of this* [Morris dance] *is a real thing, that isn't particularly, because it isn't. Although it's been going for thousands of years, it wasn't the same. So, it's a modern thing. It's always a modern thing...it's never more real than contemporary dance or ballet. But her attitude was that this was the real thing and she learnt dance, so to her dancing was something she did, and to me, dancing is something I am.*

What this discussion demonstrates are the blurred lines and multi-faceted perceptions that contribute to the status classifications of amateur and professional. As stated at the start of this discussion, the debate arose around the notion of what constituted a ‘real’ dancer. The responses were rarely a definitive ‘yes’ or ‘no’, but, as spoken about above, were usually qualified in

some way that revealed an opinion about who should or should not be eligible to take on that title or role. The following section continues this discussion.

6.5 What's in a name?

Towards the end of each interview, the participants were each asked to comment on whether or not they would give themselves the identity or title of being a "dancer". The enquiry was as much about where each participant placed themselves within the context of the type of amateur/professional spectrum, as it was into the use of the term "dancer" as a personal identifier. The expectation when asking this question was that there would be a very clear acknowledgement or denial (Yes or No) of the use of this designation, and while this was the case for most of the participants, what was not anticipated were the qualifiers, delimiting, or derogatory statements that accompanied their answers. The original assumption was based upon the conception that the longer one had been dancing (in terms of years), or those who spent a great deal of their leisure time dancing, would most likely identify themselves as a dancer. The answers generally proved otherwise and were primarily in opposition to this hypothesis. For example, the majority of those who had been dancing the most number of years most often chose to answer no to this question. Only Gregory placed himself directly in the middle with his statement of '*Fifty percent of me is a dancer'*.

Other responses included:

Geoffrey, 70: UK

I thought you'd ask that! I really don't think I can use it as my identity...Because I don't think I've done enough to deserve it, if that's the right way of thinking about it, yes… I'm an apprentice really. I'm learning it...yeah.... I couldn't own the identity of dancer.

Carys, 28: UK

No. I don't know - maybe I'm getting there. I would say I'm going dancing, let's go dancing. Are you going dancing tonight? Not, 'I'm a…dancer. I'm a Swing dancer'. Maybe I would say 'I go Swing dancing; I do Swing dancing'. But never yet 'I'm a dancer' – never used that phrase.

Taylor, 75: UK

Yes. I'm a dancer… But I'm a social dancer and that's good enough for me. And I suppose I'm ok - I'm an ok dancer, but I'd be better if I had started when I was much younger. I was in my 50's [when I began].

Guang, 45: USA

Oh, yeah. Definitely… I think probably [it took me] *about three years, or something like that. But I think…even after calling myself a dancer, that definition for myself changed too, because I think, now in retrospect I could have called myself a dancer a little bit sooner. I think…my idea of calling yourself a dancer doesn't… at the time, back when I first decided to call myself one I was thinking, do you take yourself seriously enough? Do you train hard enough? Does it matter enough? But then…now that I've been doing it for a while, I almost look back at the way I was thinking about it and I say, 'don't take yourself so seriously'. If you think of yourself as a dancer just because you love it and that is your passion, then that should be all it requires. Not if you've crossed some sort of level.*

The featured examples offer a generalised representation of the types of answers in the interviews that called into question the notion of legitimacy as proposed by Lawson. In conjunction with Dodd's dance genres hierarchy (as expressed by participant Taylor), of interest were the answers that firmly place them within a specific genre of dance. Whether the answer was yes or no, the questioning of ability and worthiness reflects a reticence of acceptance that seemingly discounts the authenticity of their claim of a total perspective transformation.

Dancer Martha Graham's famous comment on the subject noted that, if someone is questioning whether they are or will be a dancer, then the answer is that they are not (Graham in Carter and O'Shea 2010: 95). Here again, the

question remains whether any of these factors are truly determinate of who is deserving or not of ownership of “dancer’ as a marker of identity. Dance anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku, places this question within the frame of ‘Dancer’ versus ‘dancer’. She differentiates between the two by saying that dancer (small d) is one who self identifies with the role, among many, but is more concerned with the goal or activity of dancing. Whereas Dancer (large D) is one who for whom dance is all consuming; it is their primary identity other than those that are predetermined by gender or culture. Kealiinohomoku contends,

> The dancer is a dancer during a limited time and only while he is dancing: but the Dancer is a Dancer even when he is not Dancing, and the title is not limited in time.
>
> (Kealiinohomoku 1976: 23)

Under the premise of this hypothesis, the majority, if not all the participants, fall into the category of dancer. They are social dancers for whom participating in dance is a social activity, and even though many of them can be categorised as ‘career’ level participants as posed by Stebbins, the one participant who I consider to be a ‘Dancer’ as suggested by Kealiinohomoku, is Daniel. His devotion to Vogue Fem encompasses his identity and commitments in such a way that he is ‘a Dancer even when he is not Dancing’. Not only has he created a life that includes dancing both professionally and personally, featured heavily in his story were examples where his identity was formed by and through, his interaction with Vogue Fem.

Daniel, 30: UK

Who am I outside of dance? (laughing) That's a bit difficult because dance is everything to me.

This statement from the start of Daniel's interview aptly describes the role that Vogue dance plays in his life. As seen in the previous chapter, Daniel was one who danced throughout his childhood as a part of his religious upbringing, but it was not until he became acquainted with Vogue and Vogue Fem that he felt, as he says, '*one with the dance'*. Daniel knew from a young age that he was homosexual, but kept it hidden as he knew it was unacceptable because of his family's Christian beliefs.

I was aware from the age of six that I was different…I felt differently, and I looked at things very differently. But coming from a Christian family, I couldn't really let that be seen, or let my curiosity be shown. So, I had to do a lot of things behind closed doors, or when they weren't looking. Like trying on my mum's heels, trying on my mum's shoes and dresses, lipstick and all that business.

As he got older, he transferred from the lyrical movements featured in liturgical dance, to those that were more hip-hop dance based for fear of the discovery of his sexuality, often sneaking out to clubs in order try out other forms of dance. He was becoming more aware of his emerging femininity and the eventual recognition that he was transgender[95], and the dance floor at the clubs was the only safe place to explore his sexuality and changing identity.

[95] Although Daniel identifies as transgender, he has not yet completed the medical process of becoming a woman. On social media and at times in the interview, the gender identifiers of he or she are used interchangeably. It was Daniel's preference to be referred to as 'he' when speaking about him, but also with reference to his partiality towards a female identity.

…these movements were just kind of coming out when I went to the club after work or after church. (laughs) I'd be like, 'Mum, I'm going to go and just kick it with some of the church guys', and I would go to the club. I was testing out my burlesque moves in the club. I was really feminine as it was, so these moves came really naturally to me. Watching…clips of Dita Von Teese, and the commercial girls from back then, you know the hips and the chin, the booty pops and all that - the whole art of the tease. I was getting more comfortable and aware with my femininity.

He began to notice other dancers performing in a way that seemed to combine the feminine qualities of burlesque, with a modern and more fluid movement profile than hip hop or whacking. He recalled the Madonna video *Vogue* (1990), which he says he imitated as a child, much to the dismay of his mother who told him, '*Stop it! Stop doing that!... That kind of dancing is not for men'*. Upon seeing the dance again as an adult, he says,

And then one day, there was a guy there and he was Vogueing…I was like 'Wow, there's a guy doing it'… I was like, oh my God, and all of these memories started coming back. Like from when I was younger and my mother was like, 'Stop doing that!'. I was like oh my God! I'm actually seeing someone doing it in front of me instead of seeing it on the TV screen - it being a lost memory…Here is someone, in London, who is Vogueing. Woo! This is really cool! And I was just watching this guy and even though I was amazed and impressed, even though I was seeing it with my eyes, I was actually just like…I want to be able to do that because I think that could be something that would really be very me. So, me…And then my whole feminine demeanour will match up with a dance style, and it will just be like, perfect.

Daniel began to learn the general Vogue movements by watching videos on YouTube and connecting with other dancers at the clubs. The more he became involved in the community, the more confident he started to become both with his dance skills and his sexuality.

…the Vogueing dance style and Vogueing culture were something that really connected with me. Like I understood it so much and it felt really personal to me. I felt like…I felt like I was already a part of that community. Like what I've been through, how I feel, the feeling that the dance gives you. It's like yeah, Vogueing is what it's meant to be, for me.

That's when the light turned on for me. That's when also, or the period that I think that…I understood being transgender…How I actually – the way – oh, how can I say it? When I felt it I was like that fem queen from the video. I actually felt like I was her, and that felt like, very natural for my body to move that way. And then day by day, and month-by-month whatever, it seemed like everything was just clicking together. No wonder I feel this way when I dance. I feel like a woman…I'm actually thinking like a woman. It's just like everything…I don't feel like a man at all. And again, that's memories from the past, why I felt this way, why I wanted to look that way, and why I couldn't… Again, revelation after revelation.

He was asked by a friend to contribute to a performance, and was both shocked and proud when she told him that he was asked because he was considered a representative of the gay community. He responded saying '*I feel so alive right now. I fit in'*. Daniel commented that this experience was the first time in his life where he felt like all the once fractured pieces of his identity were finally coming together. Vogue and Vogue Fem became the channels through which he was becoming acquainted with himself and he began to spend all his time studying and training to improve his technique and dance skills. He changed employers and moved from the fashion industry to a dance retail store where he could practice when business was slow or no customers were present.

So now I just started training hard core every day, seven days a week. I was literally just drilling…From there I said to myself, 'I want to be one of the best Voguers in the UK'. So, whenever someone looks at me and says, 'There's that Voguer Daniel', or if they want to talk about Vogueing [they think of], *'Daniel'. Not to say that other people in the country can't or won't do it, but yeah, I just want to be known as Daniel who Vogues. That's his identity, that's his character, that's his everything. When you think of Vogue, you think of Daniel. And that's what I wanted it to be, and I've done that, I'm doing that and it's happening.*

Through the process of learning and integrating Vogue Fem into his life, Daniel claims that he was allowed, or allowed himself, to begin to establish himself as feeling more like a woman. The feminine traits displayed on the dance floor began to extend into the non-Vogue related areas of his existence and his confidence and appearance altered as a result. It reflected the alteration of the core sense of self both internally and externally.

When I started Vogueing, it took me deeper into looking at myself as an individual in regards to my sexuality, my personality, my character, my feelings, my attractions and all of that. I understood that whole thing of me feeling different, thinking different, dressing up, wishing that I had been born a girl, all of that. It made me realize, the term for this is being a part of the transgender experience…and things just started clicking…It took me a long time to being comfortable and so like – I'm a female, you know…In one of my previous relationships, the guy he said to me, 'What are you trying to say with your Vogueing? What are you trying to say as a person because you are saying this, but doing this…You need to be 100% about what you are saying and what you are doing. What do you want?' I said, 'I just want to be a comfortable, confident, woman!' So, then I recreated myself to how I actually feel, how I actually see myself. And now I don't give a flying foo about what anyone thinks or says. I can walk down the street looking the way I do and not bat an eyelid. Because at the end of the day, it's my life.

At the time of the interview Daniel had temporarily moved back into the family home with his parents. He says that they are conscious of his sexuality and desire to be a woman, but it is rarely spoken about. Although they are his

blood relatives, he says that his '*real family'* are the members of his Vogue 'houses'. Daniel just became the European "mother" of a long-standing Vogue house in New York City that claims some of the most famous Vogue dancers in the world. Amongst Daniel's dance community, the name of the House is used as his surname and identifier as a member of that "family".[96] He also created a London based House where he and a fellow dancer serve as the "parents". The goal is to act as mentors to several young adults who are training as Vogue dancers, and he sees the development of this extended community as a way of lessening the struggles for others with similar questioning about sexuality and identity. Daniel also teaches Vogue classes, sponsors dance events, and performs and competes in Europe and the United States. His latest endeavour includes choreographing and styling Vogue dancers for fashion shoots and runway shows.

I argue here that Daniel epitomises what Kealiinohomoku was referring to when she classified the difference between 'dancer' and 'Dancer' in that he embodies his dance form in a way that is linked not only to his physical participation, but to his overall identity – both on and off the dance floor. He goes beyond what Sparshott (1995) refers to as simply the 'task' of dancing, and extends its influence and value beyond what is performed in the studio or performance space. Although he was already aware of his sexual preference before engaging with Vogue and Vogue Fem, he maintains that it was through the discovery of *this* dance form that brought about his awareness and

[96] Vogue houses are identified by terms that serve as signifiers of membership. Each house also contains individuals who are referred to as 'mother' or 'father'.

eventual acceptance of his transgender identity. To him, the two discoveries are interwoven and cannot be extracted from each other. Daniel comments,

When it comes to Vogueing…even though it is dancing, for me I don't always consider it dancing. It's more than dancing. I would say it's me expressing myself. Which is dance anyway. It's just me expressing myself. It's me showing people who I am, without having to say anything.

Connected to this, Fisher-Yoshida states,

> Some of us may intentionally participate in activities that are designed to change our self-images and identities, while at other times our self-images and identities may be changed as an unintended consequence of something that has taken place.
>
> (Fisher-Yoshida 2009: 65)

In the case of Daniel, his questioning of his emerging identity as a young adult caused him to explore dance opportunities outside of the context of the religious structure. Dance was already a part of his adolescent life, but the external "performance", in both genre and integrity, did not fit his developing internal reality (Goffman 1969). In this sense the "real" dancer, meaning the one that corresponded to what he now believes to be his true identity, had yet to emerge. Psychologist Knud Illeris posits that this type of self is representative of a 'structure which, as the centre of consciousness, collects and holds together the outcomes of important learning' (Illeris 2014: 151). It signifies not only the process but the product of regeneration and identification. The liturgical dance therefore was one that did not possess any notable meaning to Daniel, and did not inspire in any way the acknowledgement of the title of being a dancer. The dance styles he found in the clubs exposed him to not only a different set of social worlds and lifestyles, but also to a participatory genre of dance that he felt both matched

and moulded his internal and external selves. Consequentially, his discovery of Vogue and Vogue Fem were in the reverse order to the above quote presented by Fisher-Yoshida. His encounter with Vogue as a child and later as an adult were unexpected, but the acknowledgement that this chosen dance form played an important role in his life, helped to solidify his acceptance of what he considers as his identity and community.

Sociologist Steph Lawler, amongst others, contends that the term 'identity' poses challenges on multiple levels and any sort of discussion on the topic must be approached keeping this in mind (Lawler 2008:1). She concurs with Maslow and Mezirow, amongst others, when she proposes that identities are created out of personally and socially constructed events and experiences, and throughout our lives multiple identities are concurrently occupied. This perception of the dualistic nature or 'internal homogeneity' (Hall 1996: 5) of identity can find itself in a state of conflict when experiences that challenge its deeply rooted tenets emerge. Within the realm of transformative learning, it is this very challenge that places a person in the position where habits of mind are re-evaluated. Illeris states that to refer to transformative learning in conjunction with identity comprises a 'criterion of importance' (Illeris 2014:153). It encompasses not only the transformation of personal belief systems, but because of the changes, provides external commentary about socialised norms. She states, 'it becomes a direct connection to the current conditions and frames of society that create the growing need for and conditions of the transforming process' (Illeris 2014:153). As such, by aligning or adopting a position within a community implies that you claim a sense of ownership or belonging to that world (Stebbins 2001, Raymond et. al 2010).

Stebbins refers to this as the acceptance of the 'unique ethos' or socialised understandings that accompany and signify insider membership. The interactive nature of the dance experiences of the participants, and their narrated stories designates them members of dance communities. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggests that within every individual there exists several closed or bounded sets of identities that may be openly expressed, or remain a silent, known only unto themselves (Hall 1996: 5); each individual has the opportunity to choose which identity to portray or perform at any given time. Therefore, is it more rational to assume that it is *through* the very nature of participation that the participants should be considered dancers - as indicated at the most basic level during moments of engagement? Although potentially conceptually and socio-culturally naïve, especially given the mixed responses from them, the earnestness of their stories and personal convictions emphasises that *they accept* that a complete transformation that includes identity, community, and beliefs about dance has taken place. Abrahams states that the,

> Stories about one's experiences provide an important resource for not only establishing one's place in the community (because of one's specialist knowledge) but also for establishing one's identity, should that be an important feature of the culture.
>
> (Abrahams 1986: 56)

Returning to the concept that the stories and identities of social dances and dancers are hidden, should the decision regarding titles rest firstly with the definition of who and what should be considered a dancer, and secondly, the personal interpretation of those considering its adoption? It seems that the socially constructed notion of legitimization in the 'real' dancer conflict rests

more in the need for an alteration of the opinions of those who control the hierarchical message. It is only then that what is acknowledged as “dance and dancer” can become more than what is viewed and performed on the proscenium stage.

6.6 ‘I Dance…’

The final question of the interview asked the participants to fill in the sentence after the words, ‘I dance...’. This provides relevant commentary about the perceived ‘durable benefits’ (Stebbins 2001) the participants received through their engagement with dance. It was a moment in the interview where the barriers, as discussed in the above section, disappeared, making them less relevant than earlier. The focus instead moved from external perceptions, to internal and more personal conceptions. The question, ‘I dance…’ was designed with the intention of providing more information about the “what, why, or how” about their experience. It was specifically designed as an “I” question to elicit a response that represented an intrapersonal stance, and was placed intentionally at the end to serve as a reflective cap on the interview. For many, the answers were short and succinct and included more light-hearted responses such as,

Jessica, 60: UK
I dance for fun!

Laura, 63: UK

The words that just pop in are – to feel good.

Veronica, 37: Poland/UK

I dance whenever I can.

Carys, 28: UK

I dance enthusiastically!

Deklen and Abram aligned their answers with their preferred dance form stating '*I dance the tango'* and '*I dance the Morris*', affirming once again their allegiance to one dance style, as well as connecting it to their earlier identity laden statements where '*I am…*' replaced *'I dance'*. Other participants reacted to this question in a manner that reflected discomfort in both their body language and verbal responses. They moved awkwardly in their seat, repeated the phrase, stuttered, and referred to their answer as being '*cheesy*' or *'overly philosophical'*. One possibility is that they presumed that their answers needed to be deeply profound, or laden with meaning, and they were not comfortable responding as such.

Taylor, 70: UK

I dance because I enjoy it. I'm trying to think of something profound like 'life is a dance!'

Laina, 40: USA

(long pause) Good question. It's so open ended. (sigh and long pause) Um… (long pause) I dance…hmmm (pause) Ok, well I'm going to go with, I dance because it brings me joy.

Others asked what it was I was looking for in a response, or tried to devise something that they thought would be "acceptable" to their perceptions of both the project as well as their impression of being co-creators in the research. Their response was followed by, '*is that alright?'* or '*was that what you were looking for?'* and some even offered to '*try again'* thinking that what they shared might need to be altered or lend a different point of view. When I

assured them there was no specific answer other than what it was they wanted to express, we either ended the interview, or it continued and an answer was revealed in the “post interview” portion that I perceived to be more authentic and without worry of what was correct or needed.

For others, this question prompted responses that took them as Lipson Lawrence states, ‘out of their heads’ (Lipson Lawrence 2012: 471), with reactions that brought visibly deeper emotions to the surface. Some participants paused, taking their time to answer, with deep breaths used to help control their emotional and physical responses. Many silently cried and asked if the recording might be paused. It was not surprising that this occurred most often with participants who encountered dance in the wake of a trauma, or life transition. But there were also those who, from the interview, indicated that dancing held a lighter role that became quite emotional. No matter their level of involvement, their responses revealed deeper or more meaningful aspects of themselves and their feelings about their experience. Here again the inferences were divided between internal and external, with the predominant language indicating either feelings or actions.

Lucy, 69: UK

I dance because it is an inner expression of who I am. So, part of that would be lost if I gave it up.

Pavi, 63: India

I dance for the love of it. I dance for myself. I dance for passion.

Darren, 46: USA

I dance...Dance had fed me this perspective of love and caring through all of the people I've met. And so, I dance to share that, even though dance it what gave it to me in the first place... So, I dance to share with people. I dance to...spread joy, and to touch people.

Perry, 53: UK

I dance for life. I think it's a fundamental part of being.

Nora, 29: Scotland/UK

(Long pause) Is that not the end of the sentence? That that's possibly it. I Dance. Yeah. That may be it actually...

Rebecca, 30: UK

I dance to live!...Dance is helping me live! It's helping me be alive. It's helping me with living. For so many years of my life I was not living. I have not lived for so many years. I've just existed, my heart's been beating, and I couldn't care less if it stopped. That's how bad it got – I couldn't care less. But now I feel like I dance! I move my body to live, to be living. It just enriches my life. Yeah…to make things easier as well. Yeah…to make my life easier. To purify it.

This final quote from Rebecca reflects the tone from three individuals who made it clear, both in the 'I dance…' statement, as well as in post-interview conversations, that they attribute their involvement with dance as playing an active role in saving their lives. Rebecca is in active recovery from anorexia and was initially introduced to 5Rhythms through a book about its founder, Gabriele Roth, as a teenager when residing in an in-patient facility. Several years later she was taken to her first 5Rhythms session on a first date with her current partner. She describes the experience,

Rebecca, 30: UK

Having loathed my body for however much, for as long as I remember – from an early age I hated my body. And when I was in recovery, when I was putting the weight on, that was the hardest part. Having to accept that thing that you never ever wanted. So, I kind of was working with that. It wasn't as bad as it was years before that, but when I walked into the class…when the music started and I realised that it was my space to move, I was frozen. It was almost like my body just didn't know what to do, it was like my body just didn't

know, or I hadn't given it permission…there was lots of tears, and it was like I was just trapped. I couldn't get it out. I hadn't connected with my body in that way. I hadn't honoured it in that way. So, after I kind of shifted a bit through the tears, I kind of started to move, my arms were down here [motions arms tight to her side] *and then I started to move and it was like then all the memories. It was like unlocking the…I guess not padlocks, but these kinds of little recesses inside myself that was opening up, and the emotions coming up. And again, crying, crying. Feeling very sad. Actually, feeling very sad that I'd been through that... I was like, 'Wow, I've been through that', and 'wow fucking hell, look at where I am now'. It was almost like I was able to connect with myself and go, 'There, there! You've been through fucking hell!'.*

It was almost like a flow…that flow theory where you are absorbed in what you are doing, but there were a lot of memories and a lot of stuff going on as well. And the biggest thing was when I tried to put my arms up and I couldn't… [Motions trying to reach up with arms*] And I related it to when I wasn't able to put food in my mouth…a kind of, 'No! No! I can't! I can't do it!' kind of fear. Ultimate fear. And I remember going, 'I can't. I can't do it!'. I mean it's lifting my arms up…* [Eyes closed tight, body rigid, and arms clasped to her sides] *and it was a fight with myself, and it reminded me a lot of the fights I used to have…the battles. When I finally did lift my arms up* [Motions lifting them up with a huge smile on her face]*…Oh God! It was like, overwhelming emotional like movements in me.*

Well, after 5Rhythms *… we have a gathering. We sit down and we just kind of take the talking stick and talk…I've always been a confident person actually, but with the anorexia it was like 'shhh'* [makes a movement with her hand moving downwards] *squashed, crushed, and destroyed. I remember taking the talking stick and just crying! And going 'thank you so much'…Yeah…and I must have said things like, 'I want my life. Thank you for this'…That night I remember going home and thinking about it and going, 'Oh my God'. My life had changed in that moment and I haven't looked back.*

Darren became a paraplegic in a diving accident in his twenties, and became confined to a wheelchair. A former member of the military, he began to dance after seeing an advertisement at a veteran's hospital, and having been involved in wheelchair athletics, he was intrigued at how he might use his body in a different way. Darren was one who stated that he had no interest in dance activities in childhood, but acknowledges that his accident changed his perspectives, both positive and negative, towards many aspects of his life. His

discovery and later serious involvement as a dancer, teacher, and performer moved him in directions both personally and professionally, that he admits he never could have anticipated, and throughout our conversation, there were many times where Darren became quite emotional. The quote below was one such moment that happened towards the end of the interview, and contains what I interpreted to be almost a confessional quality.

Darren, 46: USA

Yeah. I would say...so over the years...something in dance connected with me so much that it's become such a focus...so for your interview, I'll get real personal. Before I broke my neck, I was involved...I was involved with drugs and...crack and other things. I wouldn't say I was a crack head, right, but...I had gotten in some fights and other kinds of crap. So, what has surprised me is that dance...nothing...nothing really ever caught my attention so much so. Nothing has ever taken my attention, and interest and focus so much so...that I didn't get wrapped up on other stupid stuff...So it connected with me so much so that...I never went to any kind of program or anything to stop all that crap. It just kind of drifted away from me. Because dance has become so much, has become such a big part of who I am. So, I would say...the moment for me would be...it still happens every time. It's getting...now I accept it. But every time that a dance company would ask me to come and...I'm trying to remember the first one so I can tell you the exact moment. But it still sort of happens to me when this dance company or that dance company says, 'will you come and dance with us'. I'm like, well look at me! [Laughing] *You know what I mean? I'm like, oh yeah I think I've arrived. Even to the point now that I'm not even surprised at* [prominent wheelchair dance company]*...Now I feel like that's just who I am.*

Although this research centres around the stories of people who believe their lives have been greatly altered as a result of their experiences of engaging with dance, admittedly, the depth of feeling and emotion associated with these responses was, to me, surprising. Rebecca's example was a direct connection to a sense of physical freedom that she felt had been lost. Although in active recovery for several years prior to the dance session, the *'unlocking of the padlocks*' was connected to the bodily control exerted through/and because of her illness. Taking part in 5Rhythms, and later other improvisatory dance

practices is what she says was needed to become reacquainted with her body again. In this sense, her response to the ‘I dance…’ question has a direct link to a dance event and later experiences, which she claims had a profound impact on her physical and emotional well-being.

In the end, the perception and attribution of dancing as the reason for living, healing, and survival was unexpected, and raises many questions. Was it specifically the genre of dance itself to which they acknowledge these attributes? Or does it encompass all the aspects of the process of dancing, as well as the dance event and experience? I argue that the answers are found less in the response to the ‘I dance…’ question, and are rather found within the larger content and contexts of the stories. From these, it can be gleaned that it is the experience as a whole that contains elements that are perceived as “dance”; meaning that, in the end, it is the combined elements of movement, music, community, atmosphere, escape, and emotional response that are supporting factors.

Chapter six includes aspects of the interviews regarding perspectives and perceptions. The most prominent themes raised were those related to the acceptance, rejection, or alteration of identity. Through the consideration of comments surrounding the hierarchical concepts of “dance” and “dancer”, the response of the participants were juxtaposed, and the notion of a complete perspective transformation were discussed. The chapter ended with a presentation of the responses from the question, ‘I dance…’, which went beyond general circumstances, and revealed data loaded with emotion and meaning not mentioned in earlier portions of the interviews.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion

7.1 Conclusion

This thesis makes a contribution to the field and to dance knowledge by profiling non-professional dancers and advocating that their voices need greater representation in dance academia, dance journals, oral history collections, and the media. They occupy, as suggested by Finnegan (1989) and Ward (1997), a place that is 'hidden', and are often overshadowed by the stronger presence of more art or theatrical forms. In response, this study advocates for their inclusion, and concurs with Buck and Rowe who suggest that there are 'many different pathways to dance' (2014: xvii). As discussed in the introduction, recent publications and research groups, as well as a greater interest on the stage and television, are making non-professional dance and dancers more visible. However, as shown in the detailed responses set out in this thesis, even amongst those who actively and passionately engage with dance within social settings, there is still the perception of not being "real" dancers, in comparison to their professional counterparts. Therefore, the aim of this research argues for increased representation of non-professional dancers who bring important and valuable insight about dance and dancing as a part of social and cultural experience.

The research focused on thirty-eight adults who claimed to have had little or no relationship to, or experience with, dance in childhood; or, if there was dance participation, the impact was deemed insignificant. However, through an unexpected encounter with dance as an adult, they were compelled into further engagement either as a participating dancer, or through attending

dance events or performances. The data revealed that some such meetings were prompted by a life change or 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow 2000: 21), or were attributed to a particular individual, circumstance, or event. Other encounters were described as being extra-ordinary, much in the manner of a religious conversion. No matter the explanation, the experience opened the door to a greater awareness and engagement that had not been present prior to that moment; aiding in the alterations of prior held attitudes, opinions, and belief systems in regards to dance/dancing/dancers.

Transformation and transformative experience were key themes throughout the research. As discussed in Chapter three, the literature and classifications as to what constitutes transformation or a transformative experience are vast and diverse. For the purposes of this research it was viewed through the lens of transformative learning theory, which contends that an alteration of a belief system should be inclusive of evidence that can be perceived by both the participant and others. Considering the questions posed by Taylor, 'How does a perspective transformation manifest itself such that participants act on their lives differently?' and 'What does a perspective transformation look like behaviourally' (Taylor 2000: 298), I was challenged to look beyond the surface experience of the participant's narratives, in order to uncover the impressions and convictions that significant changes had occurred. With this in mind, three primary questions framed the research:

- What is the role dance plays in the lives and experiences of non-professional dancers, those who do not engage with formal dance training, or those who claim to not participate in dance activities?

- How does the development of a belief system about a particular activity (such as dancing), alter and affect one's perspective and perceptions in adulthood? What circumstances need to occur in order to alter such a perspective or belief system?
- What exactly does it mean to say that one's life is transformed as a result of engaging with dance? What are the parameters, circumstances, and evidence, which support or dispute such claims of transformation?

Each of these questions led an investigation into the potential alterations of systems of belief about dance and dancing from childhood to adulthood; with the aim to consider the claims of transformation and the parameters needed for such changes to occur. Encompassed within these questions was the recognition of the circumstances, perceptions, and perspectives through which such understandings are formed, as well as the assertions of transformational experiences, in beliefs and in life, as described by the participants.

A holistic approach, which recognises that the parts and pieces involved within a whole, are as important as the whole itself, supported the research both theoretically and methodologically. The point of view was found in the synergetic structures proposed by Fuller and Fuller Snyder (1.7.1), and Mezirow's constructivist framework within transformative learning theory (2.8). Important to both theoretical approaches is the consideration of all contributing details, in order to evaluate the evidence from an informed position. However, transformative learning theory occupies a more linear and

temporal structure, while Fuller Snyder's synergetic purview focuses on the micro to macro experiential collaborators. Although similar in their approach, when combined, they were utilised to explore both the internal interpretations and external influences. The primary theoretical and methodological framework therefore, became a melding of the two theories through the combination of their common holistic, social, emotional, educational, and artistic ideals. They also inspired the creation of a multi-faceted system for examining the verbalised expressions of the participants (2.10 and ii.i in the interlude), through which three key areas were identified in the data as prominent findings in the research: agency, total perspective transformation, and value.

Bandura posits that human agency is an embedded influence that 'operates within a broad network of socio-structural influences', and within such structures, 'people are producers as well as products of social systems' (Bandura 1999: 21). As such, agentic capabilities place individuals in situations where they are either the shapers or receivers of the events that structure their lives. Thus, the consequences of one's actions or decisions are essentially self-determinative, but can rarely be separated from social or environmental influences. These influences, seen in the encounters described by the participants as adults, were often characterised as an unexpected "happening", which served as openings for further dance exploration. Jung (4.6) referred to such synchronistic moments as being 'acausal', or a bringing together of the internal and external as an arranger of human events. I would argue that the claims made by the participants fall more into the category of

what Bandura terms ‘operant conditioners’ (ibid),[97] or those which are responses to external stimuli. In such cases, the focus and attribution of the experience was often placed on the external influence, rather than the personal capacity to act independently, displacing the individual as the active agent in the process of change. This is not to discount the internal influences that may have affected their decisions, but to highlight some discrepancies associated with the creation and alteration of belief systems about dance.

For example, an assertion amongst many of the participants, was that little or no experience or any relationship with dance was evident in their childhoods. Although many variances of this claim existed, somewhere included in the story was a mention of a person, circumstance, or event that was either discounted, or which pointed to a reason for rejection. For example, I originally hypothesised that the responses to the questioning of this might reveal factors directly related to internalised fears about the body, or the experience of physical engagement. This notion of ‘chorophobia’, was evident in some of the adult experiences prior to their later meeting with dance, but was an aspect that grew over time, often in response to a childhood encounter. Instead, the data revealed that an interpersonal influence with another person(s) had the most prominent impact on the beliefs about, and engagement with dancing in childhood; for example, see the stories of Matthew, Marco, and Ralph. In truth, the dance event or engagement, suggested by the participant as being the active agent, was in fact overshadowed by a personal or socialised influence such as a verbal or

[97] Based on the theory of the same name by psychologist B.F. Skinner which examines cause, response, and behaviour.

circumstantial encounter. The result was an attitudinal displacement, which should have been directed at the individual involved, but was instead bound to the activity being performed. Subsequently, the belief systems about “dance” were contextually catalogued alongside the associated feelings and memory, with the outcome being a rejection of dance and dancing. As I argued in Chapter five, the discrepancy in the stories was therefore not an absence of a relationship to dance, but one that I classified as being ‘non-physical’ (5.2), meaning that the connection to dance existed within a context of memory rather than as active physical involvement.

Interpersonal circumstances also impacted on the participants’ recognition of their own perceived agency within the narrated claims of the process of transformation as an adult. Similar to the stories about childhood experience, a person or group of people were cited most often as either the gateway to dancing, or the reason for continuing to dance. For example Jessica’s mention of being ‘*scooped up’* (4.4) by a friend and taken to a dance class, or Taylor’s creation of ‘*the Tango Gang’* (5.5.1) who attended dance events together. Although dynamically involved in the physical and social aspects of engagement, when speaking about the factors involved in the acceptance of dance, rarely did they attribute their own actions, risks, and decisions as defining features within the process of change. The reasons given for continuing to dance as an adult were often intrinsically tied to a circumstance, event, or person. So much so that credit was given to the external vehicle as being a form of a rescuer, as opposed to affirming their own willingness to engage. The message presented was therefore not, ‘I changed me’, but ‘dance changed me’. What is unclear is whether this was simply a figure of

speech, a response to the interview questions, or an actual ingrained belief. Each of these examples, as well as additional unmentioned situations most likely all play a role. It is obvious by their choices that a form of agency was enacted – as is evidenced by their current participation in dancing, or change of profession to dance. However, the ideological homage towards the altering influence dance and dancing remained, and was a clear grounding point on which most of the stories were based.

In consideration of this, an often-asked question, both to the participants and in external conversations with others about my research, was 1) why dance?, and 2) would the choice of another activity have resulted in a similar changes? Some participants held firm to the notion of “right place-right time”, while for others, the notable happening involving a dance activity, created the fracture that they claim altered their deeply held opinions and attitudes on the subject. But, as mentioned above, the data showed that the intertwining of external influences in conjunction with conscious or unconscious life changes or internal needs contributed to the causes of what was believed to be a synchronistic moment. However, the consistent pattern that resonated throughout the group was that through their association with dance and dancing, a form of “interruption” related to their state of being and/or thinking took place. This corresponds with Mezirow’s hypothesis that the opportunity to change course or introduce a new pathway in life is available at any time, with the potential willingness always existing to let go of long-held personally or socially constructed belief system. Still unclear is at what specific point this decision-making takes place, the exact criteria needed for this to occur, and whether it is dependent upon a particular belief or activity. In terms of the

narratives presented in this research, I argued that it was the known or unknown presence of a 'disorienting dilemma' or need for change, combined with a situational meeting involving dance that created the opening. After engaging with the data, I posit that engagement with another opportunity or activity might have resulted in the same circumstances, but acknowledge the participant's beliefs that it was dance and dancing that made the difference. As Taylor (2000) states, it is wholly dependent upon the unique experiences of each individual.

Mezirow posited that a 'full perspective transformation', was the final stage of, and the key to a complete alteration of a belief system. This process is inclusive of a critical shift in awareness about how prior beliefs have been deconstructed and reconstructed, acting as guides to new discoveries (Mezirow 1990, Taylor and Cranton 2012). Tisdale states that they, 'alter our very being, our beliefs, and our core sense of self – the core theme by which we live and move and define our being' (Tisdale 2012: 22). However, it is within this context that discrepancy in the data emerged.

The participants claimed that their former beliefs and resultant exclusion of dance and dancing in their lives had been permanently altered as a result of an adulthood encounter and subsequent active involvement in forms of dance. This was evidenced in the increased interest and engagement in dance activities, as well as in the reflections and narrations of how their past points of view in regards to dance had been significantly changed. However, no matter the contentions that dance and dancing had had positive and even transformative effects on their lives, the lack of acknowledgement,

qualification of, and ambivalence to embrace themselves as “dancers” (6.5), negates, according to Mezirow and within the tenets of transformative learning, that a full perspective transformation has occurred.

Dodds argues that as humans, we continually negotiate experiences in which we measure our ‘frameworks of worth’ (2011: 200). The data revealed that, for the participants, their measure of worth was tied to a sense of self-hood that was divided between personal and social structures. On one hand tangibility was achieved through examples of ‘durable benefits’ (Stebbins 2007: 11) such as renewed physical awareness, increased self-confidence, expanded social associations, and a sense of belonging. The structures developed both through, and as a result of, engaging with dance produced a form of epistemological shift that altered in some fashion, their personal value and worth. However, the conception of value was still hindered by what they perceived to be the hierarchy within the world of dance. By referring to themselves as not being ‘real’ dancers, or placing a qualifier on it that acknowledged their participation in a social dance form, my participants exposed that their overall beliefs about dance were still rooted in socialised value judgements. In essence, they did not feel worthy of adopting such a title. Dodds states that, ‘we live in a world shaped by value’ (2011: 200), and, in terms of Western cultural values, that primarily lies in theatrical or art styles of dance. The valuing of such forms has also influenced the development of the dance canon, especially as presented in higher education settings, as well as the inclusion of what types of dancers are revered in the media and, as I argued, in oral history collections. The perception, therefore, both socially and academically, of who can be considered “a dancer” does not match the dance

styles, technical abilities, and life experiences of the majority of the participants in this research. Consequently, the overall impression of their place in dance is a direct response to idealised social frameworks, opinions, and conceptualisations. They occupy a significant and well-deserved place, yet remain feeling like passionate imposters.

In consideration of future research, this raises several questions; are there differing levels of transformative learning? How are they classified? Where would the participants fall on such a spectrum? In what ways are personal versus cultural contexts included in the evaluations of full perspective transformations? Finally, how is the concept of value included and interpreted when researching claims of transformative learning? I contend that the double-sided recognition of both personal interpretation and social and cultural expectations is important. Both contain valid insights that should be investigated and acknowledged for their singular and combined merits. As such, the answers might continue to form additional avenues for further consideration and representation.

To conclude, I return to holistic premise that underpinned this research. Mezirow (2000) posits that the whole of a human life is grounded in actions and decisions that aid in the larger search for meaning. Therefore, through the process of interpreting and drawing upon past and present experiences, and responding to internal and external stimuli, individuals are involved in a constant cycle of formulating knowledge. Berger (6.1) noted that the development of knowledge is always dependent upon a personal interpretation. With this in mind, the data revealed that for the participants,

engaging with dance and dancing is more than just an activity; it was a site of revelation and refuge, a physical and metaphorical space where it was acceptable to explore different aspects of self, and the means through which personal discovery and transitions manifest. It offers community connections, creates a place of escape and fantasy, and fulfils differing levels of needs based upon each person's experience. Dance scholar Jane Carr observes,

> …I believe that any form of dance has inherent beneficial capacities such as the possibility to reconnect with self and with life in all its myriad forms, reconnect with joy, creativity and the flow of life force, and to find meaning and significance. Important for this is not necessarily the form, although this can help to create a space to explore these possibilities, but rather the intention with which we dance and the context in which this takes place.
>
> (Carr 2007: 299)

This intention is also referred to by Fuller Snyder (2005) as 'a way of knowing', or the process through which dancing incorporates aspects physical, mental, and emotional, creating connecting avenues of meaning. It is the combination of these concepts, which took the participants to an awareness that is beyond the physical, accessing other ways of knowing and being, physically, socially, and intellectually. No matter the critical assessments placed upon the narratives, what is crucial to each of the participants is *their* acceptance that the experience has had an impact on their lives, and the knowledge that their world has been enriched because of the introduction and participation to dance and dancing.

Appendices - Table of Contents

Ethics Statement

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference DAN 13/011 in the Department of Dance and was approved under the procedure of the University of Roehampton's ethics committee on 16 July, 2013.

Appendix A – Participant Consent Form

University of Roehampton London

Recruitment Consent Form

Title of Research Project: ***Finding Their Dance: The Synergetics of Dance and its Use in The Analysis of Peak Dance Experiences of "Non-Trained Dancers".***

**** Working Title***

Brief Description of Research Project:

Participants are wanted for a study that will explore the personal narratives and experiences of people who have had, what they would consider to be, a significant or 'peak experience' with dance. Significant meaning that through an encounter or experience with dance (either physical or visual), their life was transformed in a particular way. The research looks to find out the patterns and causes of such a transformation, what the transformative process entails, how it is internalised and verbalised, and the consequences that come as a result.

The participants I am seeking are those from a variety of backgrounds, gender, and age groups who did not consider themselves a dancer and did not train as dancers early in life, came to dance as a result of a physical or visual encounter/experience with dance, and are currently very actively involved in a dance practice that has shaped, changed or informed their lives in a new and meaningful way.

Participants will engage in one (or more), one on one audio and video-taped interviews lasting approximately one to two hours each, as well as allowing the researcher to observe and participate (non-recorded), in their chosen dance practice, in order to better understand their transformative experience from an embodied perspective.

Investigator Contact Details:

Deborah Williams

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Consent Statement:

I understand that I am allowing Deborah Williams to recruit participants through my organisation for the above mentioned PhD research. As a part of this study, the information may be utilised as a part of a written thesis, conference presentations that will include audio and video resources, as well as academic and journal articles.

I am aware that I am free to withdraw the consent of my organisation at any point without need for explanation.

I understand that the name of the organization will not be used in any audio, video, or print without permission.

I understand that the materials related to the participation of the organisation will be protected and preserved for a period of ten to twelve years by the researcher.

I understand that the organisation will not receive any financial compensation for their participation in this research.

Name …….

Name of the Organisation…….

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact a Representative of the Head of the Dance Department.

Contact Details:

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Appendix B – Sample Participant Recruitment Form

Have you found YOUR DANCE?

Participants are wanted for a study that will explore the personal narratives and experiences of people who have had, what they would consider to be, a significant or 'peak experience' with dance. Significant meaning that through an encounter or experience with dance (either physical or visual), their life was transformed in a particular way. The research looks to find out the patterns and causes of such a transformation, what the transformative process entails, how it is internalised and verbalised, and the consequences that come as a result.

Being sought are those from a variety of backgrounds, gender, and age groups who did not consider themselves a dancer and did not train as dancers for a part of their life, came to dance as a result of a physical or visual encounter or experience with dance, and are currently very actively involved in a dance practice that has shaped, changed or informed their lives in a new and meaningful way.

Those taking part will engage in one (or more), one on one audio and video-taped interviews lasting approximately one to two hours each, as well as allowing the researcher to observe and participate (non-recorded), within their chosen dance practice. There is no financial compensation for participation in this research.

Investigator Contact Details:

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Appendix C - Finding Their Dance: Primary Interview Questions

Today is (date) and I am interviewing (name) for the purposes of the PhD research process of Debbie Williams for the University of Roehampton.

Greeting – Hello (Name). Thank you so much for meeting with me today.

Could you please tell me your:

- Name
- Age
- Current place of Residence
- Place of Birth

1) Begin by sharing whatever you like about your life outside of dance.

2) How you were introduced to dance? What were the circumstances?

3) What were your experiences with dance, if any, when you were younger?

4) What do your family and friends think about your discovery of dance?

5) Why do think dance caught and held your attention rather than another activity?

(For example, gardening.)

6) Do you consider yourself a dancer?

7) Do you engage in other dance forms other than your primary chosen form?

8) What does dance mean to you?

9) Please complete the sentence, the first words being, ‘I dance…’

Appendix D - Glossary of Dance Styles Engaged in by the Participants

5Rhythms[98] is an improvisational dance form created by Gabrielle Roth in the late 1970s. Its development incorporated principles of Gestalt therapy, and its improvisational style is often considered a movement meditation rather than a codified dance technique. The central purpose of the style is to engage the physical and emotional states by participating in five patterns of rhythmic movement - they are in order flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical, stillness. Each of the movement patterns are accompanied by music referred to as 'waves', which works to inspire and inform the dancers as they move through the series (Roth 1998, https://www.5rhythms.com/ accessed March 19, 2017).

Appalachian Step Clogging – is a folk dance attributed to the Appalachian Mountain regions of the United States. Similar to rhythmic dance forms from the British Isles, it was thought to have emigrated to the United States with early settlers from England and Europe, and differs from its earlier counterparts with influences from Native American, Irish, and African step dances. (Hill 2014, http://cornucopia-dance.org.uk/dancers/ [accessed 2 July, 2017])

Ballet is a codified form of Western theatre dance whose roots are traced to both European folk and court dance forms. Early spectacles in Italy and France in the seventeenth century popularised the style amongst courtiers, with King Louis XIV of France acting as a key performer. The establishment in 1671 of the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris was the beginning of professional training, which progressed into a codified form in the nineteenth century. A hallmark of the technique is the turning out of the legs from the hips, with the vocabulary based upon five basic positions of the arms and legs. A traditional ballet class progresses from exercises at a stationary barre and progressing to more complex and free-standing work in the centre of the room. These form the foundation from which many versions of the style developed, but ballet terminology remains in its original French **(**Craine and Mackrell 2010, Rinaldi 2010).

Ballroom Dance is comprised of a series of social or competitive dances in which couples perform set movements. The origins can be found in the royal courts of Europe, with the contemporary forms codified and standardised in the early twentieth century by organisations such as the International Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) and the World DanceSport Federation. The modern set dances are the fox trot, tango, waltz, and quickstep, as well as the Latin dances paso doble, rumba, samba, and cha-cha. Although ballroom dancing is taught in a variety of ways, amateur students often progress through various levels of examinations that are referred to in the UK as medal tests, and in the USA by levels such as gold, silver, and bronze. These examinations are highly regulated by a host of international organisations, whose goals are to promote and preserve the integrity of the genre. An

additional hallmark and branch of the style are ballroom dance competitions. Also known as Dancesport, they are international in their scope, and include opportunities for dancers in categories professional, amateur, and Pro-Am[99]. (Marion 2008, Craine and Mackrell 2010, Bosse 2015)

Bharatanatyam is a dance form from South India whose origins are said to be as Hindu temple dances, but is now considered a transnational form. Revived as a performance art form in the nineteenth century, it is traditionally danced by a solo performer, either male or female. Accompanied by singers and the mridangam the movement is characterized by rhythmic footwork, elaborate hand gestures (mudras), and dramatic facial expressions. The physical stance consists of an upright upper body, with bent knees and a lowered pelvis. Stories of Hindu religious texts are characteristic of the repertoire, but contemporary versions of the genre incorporate aspects from multiple dance forms (Craine and Mackrell 2010, Soneji 2010).

Contemporary Dance is a form of 'movement art'[100] which developed through drawing upon multiple styles and forms such as ballet, jazz, modern, international dance forms, and pedestrian movements. Evolving in the mid-twentieth century were many techniques named of their creators such as Graham, Horton, Cunningham, and Limon. Contemporary forms embrace abstraction and experimentation, and utilise movement that is both codified and improvised. Contemporary dancers are representative of various training backgrounds and ages, and are presented on both proscenium stages and site specific venues (Carter and O'Shea 2010, Scheff et. al. 2010).

[99] Pro-Am ballroom competitions are such that a professional dancer is a paid competition partner for an amateur dancer.
[100] http://www.contemporary-dance.org/dance-terms.html

Dances of Universal Peace are a series of over four hundred circle dances set to sacred music and chanting from the world's many spiritual traditions. Created in the 1960s by Samuel L. Lewis, a Sufi teacher and Zen master, the dances are intended to be a, 'transformative spiritual practice, invoking an embodied sense of unity, presence and compassion, and touching the spiritual essence within ourselves'[101]. They are simple codified circle dances that are based upon folk dance forms from around the world and involve both songs and movement (http://www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org/about.shtm - Accessed July 6, 2016).

Flamenco is a traditional dance from Southern Spain characterized by rhythmic stamping footwork and undulating arm movements. Accompanied by classical guitar, measured clapping, and soulful singing, the footwork acts in counter-rhythms to the music to create patterns that are multi-layered and complex. Although its origins are most often attributed to Spanish gypsies, it is also thought to have been influenced by Moorish, Greek, Jewish and Arabic traditions. Now a transnational form, the music and dance are inextricably linked and often determine the mood, pattern, and geographical origins.[102] (Hayes 2009, Craine and Mackrell 2010, Martinez 2011).

Hip Hop is a form of dance that evolved out of the African-American and Hispanic communities of New York City in the 1970s. Its rise to popularity corresponded with the music form of the same name, as well as rap music, and graffiti art. The dance, while continually evolving, is recognised the world over, and is mostly associated with the styles known as break dancing,

[101] http://www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org/about.shtm (Accessed July 6, 2016)

popping and locking, and krumping. The movements associated are often very physical and athletic in nature, and although it later developed into teachable codified steps and movements, creativity, originality, and self-expression are hallmarks of the style (Craine and Mackrell 2010, Rajakumar 2012).

Integrated Dance is a genre that uses movement and performance to showcase able and differently abled dancers. It first emerged in the UK in the 1960s, and has steadily grown in popularity in the decades since. Most often rooted in contemporary dance forms, the goal is to present artistic and creative performances that showcase the potential of all types of dancers. Companies such as Axis Dance and Dancing Wheels (USA) feature wheelchair dancers, while Amici Dance Theatre and Candoco (UK) bring together dancers from different backgrounds. Mainstream choreographers such as Jerome Bel are also taking an interest and creating contemporary proscenium performance pieces featuring integrated companies of dancers. (Benjamin 2002, Kuppers 2003)

International Folk Dance – Folk dances are recreational dances from around the world that are attributed to 'traditional communities' (Craine and Mackrell 2010: 174). Usually performed at local festivals or public events, they are taught dances that have been passed down through the generations. International folk dance is a multi-cultural genre where the dancers are people who may not be ethnically representative of the dances being taught. During such dance events, dances from many countries are presented, and are often more syllabus based rather than traditionally grounded. (Casey 1981, Craine and Mackrell 2010)

Lindy Hop/Swing Dance – are couple dances that originated in Harlem, New York in the 1920s and 1930s. Performed primarily to swing and jazz music in dance halls such as the Savoy ballroom, their foundations are located in dances such as the Charleston, and Texas Tommy. Early versions were fast paced and athletic, with a mixture of codified steps and improvised movements included aerials, jumps, and throws, with a signature step known as the swing out. Later incarnations evolved into movements that were slower and more controlled. Although most popular from the 1930s to the 1950s, the 1980s saw a revival of the dance forms both in the US and internationally, that continues to the present day. **West Coast Swing** is a hybrid of the traditional forms of swing dance made famous in the Savoy ballrooms in New York City. The creation of the style is attributed to American dancer and choreographer Dean Collins, who spent time at the Savoy before relocating to Los Angeles in the late 1930s. Sometimes referred to as California Swing, the difference from the original form can be found in the more grounded smoothness of the movement, the changing positioning of the partners, and the speed and pace of the movement. The dance takes place within a “slot” where the partners occupy a rectangular space on the dance floor. First danced to Big Bang music, this gave way over time to Rock and Roll and Rock-a-billy styles. (Batchelor 1997, McMains 2007, Akombo 2016)

Morris Dance is a type of English folk dance that dates to the fifteenth century. Traditionally performed by a side, or a group of men, the dance is executed through a variety of set patterns and steps. Also included are various props such as bells that are worn on the shins, sticks, handkerchiefs, and swords that are utilised in the choreographed dances. English Morris dances differ from region to region, with the types of dances named after their location of origin. Additionally, Morris sides can now be found in many countries around the world, and include both mixed and female performers. (Heaney 2004, Craine and Mackrell 2010)

Shamanic Trance Dance is a contemporary and improvisatory form of moving inspired by rituals from traditional medicinal practices from around the world. Accompanied by drums, rhythmic clapping and chanting, the music and movement is used to induce the dancer into a trance-like state of being in order to facilitate healing and spiritual guidance. It is not attributed to any particular tradition or background, with the practitioner drawing upon aspects from multiple cultural practices. (http://shamanictrancedance.co.uk/ (Accessed July 6, 2016)

Tango – is a partner dance attributed to the Rio de la Plata which includes both the South American countries of Argentina and Uruguay. Believed to be a combination of movements derived from African slaves European, and Latin American peoples, the dance is thought to have originated in the mid-nineteenth century in the slums of Buenos Aires. The movement, done to a 2/4 or 4/4 rhythm, has the partners in either an open hold, or a close interlocked embrace. It is characterized by intricate footwork, and can also include lifts and kicks, all of which are inserted into complicated dance figures

when performed at a milonga. Tango has been divided into different styles, most notably, Argentinian, Ballroom, and Nuevo. Each retain the basic tenets of the form, but contain slightly different interpretations. (Craine and Mackrell 2010, Davis 2015)

Vogue – is a form of house dance that emerged in the 1980s in the gay and transgender communities of New York City. Characterised by stylised walking and posing, it also incorporates a combination of elaborate angular arm and hand movements. Later versions became more athletic with elaborate floor work and drops included in the routines. Traditionally done at what are referred to as balls, the dancers perform and compete against each other on makeshift catwalks. The mid-1990s saw the development of **Vogue-Fem**, a hybrid of the original form that incorporated what were perceived to be more graceful feminine movements. Along with the traditional hand gestures, it also includes drops, rolls, and spins that accentuate the dancer's flirtatious and sensual performance. Although primarily performed in late night venues, the style rose to popularity with the song and music video *Vogue* (1990) by the popular American musical artist Madonna. (Sussman 2000, Regnault and Baker 2011)

Appendix E - Participant Profiles and Initial Coding Data

Abram is sixty-three years old and lives on the South coast of the UK. An astro-physicist by profession, he first encountered Morris dance during the second year of his PhD. Invited by a friend, he originally went along out of curiosity and attended regularly for the remainder of his studies. This led to his occasional '*dancing out'* with the group, and over the next few years he says that he worked towards '*slowly becoming more proficient'*. That he became involved in dance was a bit of a shock as he never danced when he was growing up, claiming that '*I lived my life in my head'*. But somehow Morris dancing stuck and he continues to be involved. Early in his experience the group with whom he performed added a ladies side, and it was there that he met his current wife, a Morris and Step dancer. Abram's work took them to Asia and America where they also expanded their dance knowledge. Upon their return to England they started a local performing company that included both styles of dance, and although this company has now closed, they are both still involved in various remnants that includes teaching and presenting in schools and universities. Identity was an interesting aspect of Abram's story in that he mentioned that he goes by different names in his professional and dance circles. He knows when he picks up the phone who is calling and for what purpose by the name they use to address him. In this way, each of his worlds, which for him both contain a certain amount of intensity, remain separate, but equal. (A.1, B.2, C.2&4, D.2, E.1, F.1)

Carys is twenty-eight years old and lives in London, UK. As a child, when it came to dance she said, '*Absolutely not*!'- a sentiment that extended to all forms of physical activity. Instead her creative pursuits centred on the visual arts and at University she trained to be an architect specialising in historic buildings. She became acquainted with swing dance when her boyfriend showed her a few steps in his kitchen, and although uncomfortable, she decided to take some classes on her own in order to better understand his passion for dance. A few months later they attended their one and only dance evening together before going their separate ways, but she said that it is the best thing she took away from the relationship. After a few months, she found a group of students with whom she could go to dance events, and together they found the courage to continue. When reflecting on her activities prior to learning to dance, she realised how sedentary and solitary her life was, and how much more alcohol she was drinking. Through dancing she not only became physically active, she has lost weight, drinks far less alcohol, and found a new community with whom she is becoming more comfortable. A sign of this she says is beginning to incorporate vintage clothing into both her every-day and dance wardrobes. She says about dancing, '*It's just created a new avenue of interest, buts it's also sort of a wellbeing, a joy that comes about from social side of dancing…it's added a lot to my life'*. (A.3, B.1, C.1 & 2, E.2 & 3, F.1)

Calvin is seventy-nine years old and lives in London. Raised in Scotland, he cites his first memorable dance experience as one where, as a seven-year-old, he played David in the school play where he had to '*dance before the Lord*'. Not long after he moved to England where he lived with family members after his mother was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was placed in a sanatorium. Eventually he attended the military academy where dance played a role through the Scottish dances required as a part of officer training. It was during this time that he attended a performance of a ballet company. Completely enamoured by the experience, he wrote to the ballet school and asked if they would accept him as a student. Their response was, that at seventeen they considered him too old to begin ballet training. Calvin progressed into his career as a military officer, and leaving active service, trained and served as a Catholic priest. Upon retirement from the clergy in his late 60s, he decided to try a new activity, and the only open possibility open to him through a local adult education programme was dance. He remembered his earlier experiences as David, and with the ballet performance and decided to join the class. An enthusiastic participant, he soon found that he was quite an interesting dancer and within the first year he was cast in several performances with prominent choreographers using senior adults. After a few years, he decided to go back to university and received a Graduate Diploma in Dance. He continues to perform with several companies and choreographers and claims that one third of his income is received from his professional dance work. Looking back on his letter of rejection from the ballet school he said, '*If they had accepted me I would have finished dancing by the age of forty. Instead I am still dancing at age eighty'*. (A.2, B.3, C.1 & 4, D.1 & 3, E.1 & 2, F.2)

Cathy is forty years old and currently living in London, UK. Originally from Spain, she describes her younger self as uncoordinated and completely wrong for dance, choosing athletics instead as a way to express herself physically. Always exposed to music and art by her mother, it was not until her late teens that she encountered dance. She describes her moment of transformation as one that took place when she attended a performance of a Spanish ballet company in Madrid. She says, *'It was the dancers, the lights, the music – it was just everything. I just loved it so much'*, and from that moment forward she decided to include dance as an important part of her life. When studying to be a lawyer in Madrid, she joined a folk-dance group at her university and attended as many performances as possible – a habit that progressed with her as she moved forward in her life. In 2010 she left her law career in Spain and moved to London where she applied and was chosen to be a dance reviewer for a prestigious dance and theatre awards panel. As a part of this opportunity she saw many different genres of dance, but ballet remained her passion – so much so that she enrolled in a postgraduate programme in London specialising in ballet studies. Her academic work led to the attainment of a scholarship for a PhD where she is continuing the work begun in her MA. Although she attends folk dance sessions several times per week, she does not consider herself to be a dancer in any way. Instead she prefers to remain what she considers to be the most important – simply a lover of dance. (A.1&2, B.1 & 2, C.3, D.1 & 3, E.1 &2, F.1)

Cedric is fifty-four years old and lives in London, UK. Originally from Northern Ireland, Cedric describes his religious upbringing as one that was dotted with conflict, violence, with the only dance exposure being that which he considered as a part of a '*particular Irish agenda'*. Not a participant in athletics when young, he admits that he actively avoided activities that required physical exertion and contact. As a young adult seeking a way in which he could escape the violence of his home city, he decided to move south into the Irish Republic and enter training for the priesthood. During this time, and in addition to his religious studies, he joined several drama societies, some of which involved working with people with disabilities. One day Cedric read an article in a local paper about a man in London who ran a dance company for people with disabilities. He connected to this saying that deep down, *'I knew that there was something [that reacted] very much in my psyche…I knew that this was something that would be good for me*'. At the end of his formal studies he made the decision to leave the priesthood, and began working in hospitals and group homes with people with disabilities full time; first in Ireland, and later when he relocated to London. Inspired by the dramatics groups that he trained with in Ireland, he began to include drama based activities in his interactions with his clients. The director of the hospital in London where he was employed suggested that he attend some workshops, one of which happened to be with the director of the company from the newspaper article he had read about so many years earlier. Although intimidated by the notion of moving and physically connecting with others, he describes his first workshop as a type of '*Road to Damascus'* or life altering experience. Over the next few years he continued to attend workshops

whenever possible, incorporating what he learned with his clients. He eventually worked up the courage and phoned the director, requesting to be a member of the performing company, to which the response was *'what took you so long*?' Twenty years later he holds the title of associate director, teaches workshops and classes several times a week, and has performed with the company all over the world. His daughter is following in his footsteps with a featured role in one of the company's recent productions. He has also assisted several students with disabilities attend dance classes at a London University. When reflecting on his early fears about dance and physical activity, he is grateful that his life changed to include dance. He says, '*As long as I have a breath in my body I will continue to move. And if I'm not dancing in front of an audience, I'll be dancing at home in the kitchen'*. (A.1 & 2, B.2, C.1 & 2, 3, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.1)

Celine is a thirty-two-year-old music teacher who currently lives and works in a suburb of Washington DC (USA). She was raised in a military family where Christian faith served as a foundation. Although dance was not restricted in their household, it was not allowed in her faith based schools and University. She mentions longing to dance when she was a child, but was never allowed to '*fulfil the ballet dream'*. At university, she studied music and music education and describes herself as being extremely shy, introverted, and one who experienced bouts of depression. During this time, she was invited to a Big Band concert where she was involuntarily pulled up onstage to dance by a friend. Although embarrassed, she recalls the feeling of moving as being one of pure joy – a feeling she wanted to experience more often. Not long after, her sister introduced her to swing dancing. Although terrified, she made a

commitment to her sister, who was moving to another state, to continue to learn to dance, and she attended local dance events where she learned from other community members. Teaching assignments took her to other parts of America where she sometimes had to travel several hours to find dance venues, which she described as needing to get a '*dance fix'*. At the time of the interview she had relocated back to the east coast where she was in the process of looking for work closer to her fiancé, whom she met while dancing. Towards the end of the interview Celine disclosed having experienced several abusive situations in her life. Her view towards dance is one that now includes elements of personal safety and healing. She says, *'…each dance, I feel, is a healing experience…You have a great opportunity in your life that [through dance] you can relearn to trust people'*. (A.1 & 3, B.1 & 2, C.2 & 4, D.2, E.1 & 3, F.1)

Dean is sixty years old and lives in London, UK. Although he claims to have had little to no dance experience as a child, he spoke about living next door to a dance teacher who told him on a regular basis that '*there was a dancer inside of him!'* Discounting what would prove to be prophetic words from his former neighbour, Dean become a military pilot and later a financial trader. Looking for an activity that they could do together, he and his wife joined a ballroom dance class that they say '*was the most miserable experience of our lives'*, and blaming the inexperienced teaching and terrible music, they vowed to never try dancing again. But a few years later after watching *Strictly Come Dancing* (2004 – present), they tried again at a new studio and had a wonderful time. It was around this time that Dean, who was the first-aid/emergency responder for his company, remembers going to a training

session where he spoke about the large numbers of people he worked with who were falling seriously ill with heart attacks or strokes. This conversation forced him to reconsider his own health and happiness, and he realised that the only thing bringing him joy was the ever-increasing number of dance classes he was attending each week. After a long discussion with his wife, who encouraged him to follow his heart, he decided to take early retirement and opened a ballroom dancing school for adults. His dance experiences continued when he attended an open audition and was chosen to be a participant in the opening ceremony for the 2012 London Olympic Games. This led to becoming a member of POD – the Post Olympic Dancers, with whom he takes classes and performs regularly around the UK. (A.1 & 4, B.3, C. 1 & 4, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.3)

Daniel is thirty years old and lives in London, UK, where he is currently employed as the manager of a large dance retail store. The child of Sri Lankan parents, he was raised in a strict household where a Christian faith base was interwoven throughout all parts of their lives. As a young man Daniel had some dance training, which was mostly utilised as dance for worship during Sunday services. From a young age, he knew instinctively that he was gay, and as a teenager he remembers seeing the Madonna video of her song '*Vogue*' (1991), and became obsessed with the thought that this might be a world where he could belong and be accepted. He began sneaking out to street dance clubs and caught the eye of some dancers who took him under their wing, eventually being "adopted" into a Vogue "house" or family. Daniel claims that it was through dance, especially the form known as Vogue Fem, that he was able to both accept his sexuality and the knowledge that he

was transgender. He said, '*If I didn't start Vogue-ing, I wouldn't have become aware…it took me deeper into looking at myself as an individual in regards to my sexuality, my personality, my character, my feelings…I understood the whole of me who had been feeling different, thinking different…things just started clicking*'. Although currently living at home with his parents, he has a supportive community who accept and care about him, as well as share his passion for dance. In addition to his employment in the dancewear industry, Daniel also teaches Vogue-ing classes, has established his own "house", and runs monthly Vogue and Vogue Fem dance events. (A.4, B.3, C.2 & 3, 4, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.2)

Darren is forty-six years old and lives in Florida, USA. He grew up in upstate New York where after high school, he enlisted in the Navy and later worked for a large parcel delivery service company. He says, '*I was a watchin' football and drinkin' beer kind of guy. Dance was absolutely the furthest thing that anybody was going to think that I was going to do'*. When he was twenty-six, a diving accident resulted in a broken neck, leaving him a paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair. After the accident, he moved to Florida to live with a sister where he found himself looking after her children. This led to the opening of small day-care centre, and eventually a degree in early childhood education. At a routine visit to a local VA hospital, he saw an advertisement posted by a woman who was interested in choreographing and dancing with people in wheelchairs. Still very physically active, and currently taking a break from wheelchair track and field, he was intrigued and decided to give it a try. Although neither had any experience with integrated dance, they managed to put together a small show that was performed at a large local theme park.

This led to further engagements and an expansion of the company. The two eventually split leaving Darren to form his own integrated company, which has now become recognised for artistic excellence by his local arts community. Over the past ten years as a dancer Darren has performed in both the United States and abroad both as a solo artist and with his company. At the time of the interview he was preparing to join a high-profile wheelchair dance company in the US, for a year as a guest dancer. When asked what he loves about dancing he says, '*What I found in dance, it's never ending…I want to try something new, and something new, and something new…*'. (A.1, B.1, C.1 & 2, 3, 3, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.2)

Deklin is forty years old and lives in Germany. Italian by birth, he moved to Germany six years ago for his profession as a medical physicist, but also to follow a love affair. Shortly after he arrived his girlfriend left him and he found himself in a new country, with a large empty apartment, and no friends or family. One evening after a company holiday party, he and some colleagues unexpectedly found themselves in a local tango club. Also an amateur photographer, he decided to stay and take pictures of some of the dancers. This continued for many months and he slowly became known in the tango community – but never as a dancer. He says, '*I never thought about dancing because before I was kind of [a] nerd guy in a lab, and my experience with movement was always clumsy…even when I was dancing with friends…I was always one of those guys who was sitting at the bar and drinking and not even trying to move'*. A chance meeting brought an offer of tango lessons and slowly he began to learn to dance, and was '*bitten by the tango bug'*. As a means of improving quickly, he took a trip to Buenos Aires where he met a

teacher who changed his entire way of thinking and dancing. A second chance occurrence brought this teacher to Berlin where Deklin opened his home for him to teach private and small group lessons. This led to other evenings, which became so popular that he eventually re-modelled his apartment - removing several walls to create more space for dancing. He now regularly hosts tango events, which, because of the historic parquet floors in his house, were originally known as "*Tango in Socks*". (A.1, B.1, C.1 & 2, 3, D.1, E.1 &2, F.2)

Delia is fifty-nine years old and lives in Baltimore, USA. She took dance classes as a very young child, but had to give it up as time and money were limited in her family. As she got older she became what she refers to as '*a closet dancer'*, dancing in her bedroom and watching dance on television. At university, she was unclear about her path of study, and took a variety of classes without settling on a particular course. At the urging of a friend she took a contemporary dance class where she recalled a moment where the teacher performed a movement that made her realise that she '*wanted to move like that'*. Technically at a beginner level, she proceeded, in her words, *'to be led from right person to right person*'. She began taking classes every day in contemporary and ballet, and after a few years of serious study, was accepted into a conservatoire programme. During this time, as she said, she '*discovered choreography'* and after one year left the conservatoire for a newly formed university programme that would allow her to both perform and choreograph. After completing her degree, she formed her own contemporary dance company which she ran for nineteen years. She also opened a small dance studio where she could teach and experiment with choreography. Delia

currently teaches dance at a private girls' school, and asked why she thinks that dance has sustained her for forty-one years, she says *'Movement and dance to me…it's a way to let the light come out in you'*. (A.4, B.1 & 4, C.1 & 4, D.1 & 3, E.1, F.1)

Geoffrey is seventy years old and lives in London, UK. Married with three adult children, he is currently retired from his profession as a social worker and lecturer. His limited dance experiences were relegated to his university years where as a member of a band, they would play for social dances as a way to meet girls. Always physically active, he participated in sports as a discus thrower and rugby player, and later in life joined a men's Morris dance side. He was introduced to contemporary dance when his daughter, who has Down's Syndrome, was in the process of leaving an abusive relationship and needed an activity to help her move forward in her life. She joined a London based integrated dance company and Geoffrey says that he went along purely as her *'taxi driver'*. The group's enthusiastic director would not let him sit on the side-lines and invited him to join the classes and rehearsals. He began dancing while still working in a position where he was counselling individuals in very difficult circumstances, and says that not only was dancing a physical outlet, it was also a verbal one in that it that wasn't bound by rules of confidentiality. He says that his definition of being transformed through dance relates more to becoming comfortable with himself, with working with people with different abilities, and with performing on stage. The biggest change however, has been the deepening of his connection with his daughter through both their time dancing together, as well as their car trips to and from rehearsals and performances. He estimated that the two of them have only

missed two rehearsals in fourteen years. Ever the educator, he says, *'what grabs me particularly is the dance, but [also] seeing other people being able to use dance for their own development…I dance because I can. I dance because other people do'*. (A.2, B.2, C.1 & 2. 4, D.2, E.1, F.3)

Gregory is sixty-seven years old and lives in London, UK. He says that his dancing as a youth centred around activities meant to attract girls, but didn't include much '*actual dancing' – meaning that it didn't involve any 'true knowledge of dancing'*. As an adult Gregory had a variety of career paths that included working in a large London fashion house, owning and operating a farm, and teaching English to foreign businessmen. His employment opportunities allowed for quite a lot of travel, especially the latter one where he and his wife spent several years living abroad in Asia and Europe. In between assignments the two of them became interested in taking ballroom dance classes as an activity that they could do together. Beginning their dance journey in the UK, it continued as they relocated around the globe and discovered that ballroom dancing was a popular activity amongst the expat communities. Upon his retirement and their permanent return to London, they found that in their absence, their neighbourhood had undergone a form of revitalisation that included community based classes. Seeing that one of them was ballroom dancing, he attended a few sessions and let it be known to the somewhat elderly teacher that he had quite a bit of experience. When this teacher decided to go on holiday, he asked Gregory if he would take over while he was away. This holiday became permanent and Gregory has made it his own programme, expanding the number of students, classes, and socials, and inserting a teaching model he found popular while living in Austria.

Frustrated with the limited number of open ballroom dance opportunities in London, he has also created an online organisation that distributes information about upcoming events. His favourite part about ballroom dancing is the opportunity to interact and communicate non-verbally with people from a variety of backgrounds. He says, *'…the way ballroom dancing has changed my life is…I have another way to communicate with people'*. (A.1, B.3, C.1 & 4, D.2, E.1, F.4)

Guang is forty-five years old and lives in Washington DC, USA. Currently employed as a military IT specialist, he is a first generation American of Chinese ancestry. As a child, his life was dominated by academics with little exposure to the arts. In an attempt for him to be more *"American"*, his parents enrolled him in sports activities such as baseball and soccer, but his favourite physical practice was extensive training in martial arts. In his early thirties, a divorce and waning interest in his martial arts practice found him at a crossroads. After watching several movies featuring dance such as *Honey* (2003), and *You Got Served* (2004), he became interested in trying hip-hop based movement, and found a local studio that offered adult classes. Having never taken dance, he describes his first class as '*a bit of a disaster'*, but he soon returned because he found the teacher to be very encouraging, especially to beginning students. He found a group of friends and together they took a variety of classes in whatever styles were offered. Eventually he settled on studying hip-hop exclusively and began to form what would become a serious practice, even converting his garage into a dance studio which he refers to as '*the lab'*. An avid traveller, he says that one of the first things he does upon arriving at a new place is look for a venue where he can dance. He

says, *'It's kind of like looking to find out the local AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] meeting. People are just always trying to find the local session to go to!'* He eventually re-married and said that from the start of their relationship his wife knew and understood the importance of dance in his life. Much to his delight, his stepson is becoming interested in hip-hop, and attends a class for young people taught by Guang. After a few years of dancing and competing, he and a friend began to organise hip-hop events in Washington DC and Virginia, and have since become one of the largest sponsors in the area. Although not financially successful, he feels a responsibility to his dance community to continue to provide opportunities for people from many types of backgrounds to gather and dance together. He states, *'I'm not just growing it for myself, I'm growing it within a community…It's really starting to happen!'* (A.1, B.1 & 3, C.1 & 2, 4, D.2, E.1 & 2, F.3)

Jessica is sixty years old and lives in London, UK. Of herself as a child she says, *'I was the most uncoordinated child you ever came across. I didn't do any dancing'*. Instead she studied piano with the intention of training to be a music teacher. Widowed at twenty-two, she says that a dance teacher she knew '*scooped her up'* and took her to class, providing her with an activity that allowed her to move out of her grieving. She says, '*…basically when you dance, you are concentrating so much on where you're putting your feet, that you can't think about any troubles. So, that's how I really started…'* She began attending classes and, as an adult, took exams in ballet, tap, and stage dancing. She also joined a local theatrical society and began singing and dancing in musical productions. She says that her '*real relationship'* with dance occurred a few years later when she came out as being gay and was

introduced to same sex ballroom dancing by a friend. Immediately feeling like she was accepted into the group, she found that the same sex dance community was very encouraging and she decided to continue. Around this time, she also became a DJ and now is one of only a few who specialises in playing music for ballroom dance events. In this capacity, she also co-runs an organisation which sponsors monthly dance events, as well as the only same sex ballroom dance competition in the UK. Although she considers herself to be primarily a social dancer, she has entered a few competitions at the Gay Games as both a couple and as a part of a ballroom formation team. At one such event she was randomly paired a woman with whom she had been casually acquainted. She says that not only did they win their event, the greatest prize was that they fell in love on the dance floor. When reflecting upon her life before and after dance she comments, *'I can't imagine a world and not being involved in dancing…and that's really strange actually from somebody who didn't dance at all…[but] I am the one that believes that tone deaf singers can sing, and uncoordinated dancers can dance'*. (A.1 & 3, B.2, C.1 &2, D.1 & 2, E.2 & 3, F.2)

Kade is fifty-two years old and lives in London, UK. American by birth, she grew up in New York City where she says as a child she was, *'sent to the ubiquitous tap and jazz and ballet classes…'*. Realising that she was not destined to be a Broadway dancer she focused her attention on acting, gaining both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the subject. After university, she spent several years working as an actress, but a life crisis forced her to reassess her professional aspirations. In a conversation with a friend she randomly commented that in her new career, *'I want to be Fred*

Astaire!' A few days later there was a message on her voice mail from a new Fred Astaire Dance Studio in her neighbourhood with an offer for a free dance lesson. A believer in synchronicity, she went along to the lesson where she says she had a *'lightning bolt…Divine inspiration…writing on the wall'*, kind of moment. She spent the next three years studying to be a ballroom dance instructor, intermittently performing and competing to progress through the proper qualifications. After becoming certified as a ballroom dance teacher, she worked for a few years in the States, then relocated to the UK where she co-owned and operated a popular ballroom dance studio for twenty years. Private tango dance lessons with a celebrity couple led to a decade of choreographing opportunities for one of Britain's popular dance television programmes. She also coordinated and ran other popular ballroom dance events throughout the city. She has recently transitioned careers into one of teaching Tai Chi and Qi Gong, hoping to continue to counsel and inspire people through movement. (A.4, B.3 & 4, C.2 & 3, D.1, E.1, F2)

Laina is a forty-year-old professional classical pianist who currently lives in Baltimore, USA. As a child, she took gymnastics, where she says that she first '*connected with a love of moving to music'*. In an attempt to save a failing relationship while in graduate school, she registered for a series of ten ballroom dance classes. Her boyfriend came to one lesson, they separated, and she returned on her own for the final nine. Dancing soon became her passion and she found herself taking classes several times a week and entering small competitions. A relocation to Baltimore saw a switch from ballroom to west coast swing, as she says, '*the style that stuck'*. An engagement and eventual marriage to a man that was jealous of her dancing

partners caused her to stop dancing for several years, but she returned immediately after they divorced. When not touring, Laina continues to dance several times a week, including travelling several hours each way to attend events. She also competes twelve to fifteen times a year across the United States with both an amateur and pro-am partner. For each of these routines she has paid for the choreography and the opportunity to compete with a professional partner and says '*Participating in this type of dance is a very expensive hobby!*' Although a large part of her life, it was only recently that she revealed her dance life to her colleagues for fear that they might think that her participation in social dance was '*beneath that of a serious classical musician'*. But her love of dancing helped her overcome her fears and she now includes it as the final line of her professional biography. (A.3 & 4, B.3, C.2 & 4, D.2, E.1 & 2, F.2)

Laura is sixty-three years old and lives in a suburb of London, UK. A mother and grandmother, she currently works as a yoga instructor and leader of movement sessions for adults with disabilities. As a child Laura longed to be involved with dance, but was unable to due to financial difficulties within her family. Shy and quiet by nature, she instead placed her attention on becoming an educator for children with special needs. While working in this field, she took a dance workshop for special educators, where she says, her life and perspective were forever altered. She began to use the techniques she learned with her students, and continued to seek out classes and workshops with the instructor. This continued for several years and she eventually began to both dance with his integrated dance company, as well as take over the teaching of several courses. To this day, besides her study of yoga, Laura

says that what she has found with this method of teaching and learning fulfils both her personal and professional curiosities, and she has never strayed from her teacher and his techniques of working. Besides her yoga practice, she has never held any interest in other forms of dancing, stating that her involvement with this form is more than enough. (A.1 & 3, B.3, C.1, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.1)

Lucy is sixty-eight years old and lives in London, UK. She says that her mother placed her in dance classes as a child because she was always dancing around the house. She began with tap and ballet, and changed to ballroom dance as a teenager. In college, she chose to investigate biblical studies instead of dance, and upon completion entered the novitiate where she trained to be a teacher. Her profession took her to Malta and Newcastle on Tyne where she eventually took her final vows. Over the next few years dance was not a part of her life, with the exception of occasionally dancing in the gym with the permission of the Head Teacher at the school where she was employed. She eventually moved to Oxford, and then to Hammersmith where she saw a flyer for a sacred circle dance class, and says if it had not said the word '*sacred*' she would not have attended. She danced with this group for a while, but her interest waned as it didn't inspire her physically or intellectually. She decided to attend one final class and encountered sacred circle dances choreographed by a teacher from Germany that she says prompted a transformative moment where she was finally able to '*dance her prayer'*, finally connecting the '*outward expression of her inner experience'*. For twenty years, she has studied with this teacher and her daughters, working with them in the UK and traveling several times a year to work with

them in Germany. This, she says, has not been easy given that she does not speak German, but her dedication to dancing and her teachers has eased any translation difficulties. She has also begun to teach her own classes and workshops in England and Hungary, following in the footsteps of her teachers. For her, dancing is a means of prayer, but also of finding and keeping personal, physical, and spiritual balance. She says, *'I think that, in very simple terms, it's a total harmony of body, mind, and spirit. Which sounds incredibly grand, and perhaps a little bit pious even. But I think it is a point when you know that your whole body is giving expression to something that you are aware of, both in your mind and in your inner self*'. (A.4, B.3, C.1 & 3, D.2, E.1 & 2, F.2)

Malcolm is sixty-eight years old and lives in Newcastle on Tyne, UK. He describes his early association to dance as '*terrible Dead [Grateful Dead] dancing at parties'*. As an adult, he tried a tango or swing class once or twice, but nothing really stuck. He spoke about experiencing a significant change in his attitude towards his body when he attended a yoga workshop in Greece. Originally intending to take a cooking class, the only space available when he registered was yoga. He described the first three days as being 'absolute hell', but with time became reacquainted with his body and *'rediscovered a spark that had been long forgotten'*. This experience made him re-evaluate his life and he made the decision to prioritise family and personal wellbeing, and he began to delegate more and more of his HR business to other employees. A few years later when visiting friends in Belgium, he was introduced to a five rhythms class and once again felt feelings similar to those he had while in Greece. Upon returning to Newcastle, he discovered the local five rhythms

group and began attending Wednesday evening classes. This expanded to include weekend workshops, further yoga training, and the development of what he considers to be a *'different type of lifestyle'*. He trained to be a yoga and meditation teacher and continued his participation in Five Rhythms. Although he doesn't consider any of these forms as *"dance*", but embodied practice. When asked if he considered himself to be a dancer he responded with an unhesitating *'Yes!'* He attributes this to his belief that moving in such a way is *'just a natural and intuitive way of being that just feels right'*. (A.2, B.2, C.2 & 3, 4, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.1)

Mallory is fifty-one years old and lives in Newcastle on Tyne, UK. Originally from the Netherlands, she took ballroom dancing as a child, but was tall and was often unable to find a male partner. This, as well as her stature made her uncomfortable with her body and so she left dancing for several decades. One day while walking through a local library, she noticed a flyer for a Five Rhythms class. Although a bit intimidated at the thought of entering a class with more experienced dancers, she went along and enjoyed it enough that she enrolled for the rest of the term. As she became more confident with five rhythms, she began to attend more classes at her home studio as well as in other locations such as outdoor festivals and weekend workshops. At one such weekend she experienced a profound moment where in the section of the dance called chaos, she entered a kind of trance state where she was finally able to express and release her anger about the death of her father. Although she had seen a therapist for this issue, she attributes her ability to finally let this deep emotion go to her dance participation. Although her job keeps her very busy, she tries to attend a five rhythms session at least once or twice a week. In addition, she has also begun to attend lindy hop classes. Her '*five minutes of fame'* moment

occurred a few years ago when she danced on the fourth plinth[103] at Trafalgar Square. Chosen from a large pool of applicants, she hired a band and improvised for over an hour on the raised platform utilising movement from the Five Rhythms vocabulary. Photographs of her performance ended up on the front pages of several large newspapers, as well as on the BBC. She says that dancing has opened up her life in so many important ways, and that without it '*my life would be very colourless'*. (A.4, B.3, C.2 & C.4, D.2, E.2, F.2)

Marco is sixty-seven years old and lives in Cambridgeshire, UK. His earliest recollection about dance was when, as a teenager, he and a male friend were forcibly removed from a school mixer, when in an attempt to attract girls onto the empty dance floor, they decided to begin dancing together. Misinterpreted by the chaperones, the two boys were removed from the event and were accused of being homosexual. This negative experience involving dance turned into a deep-seated fear that kept him away from participating in movement for over twenty years. As an adult Marco married and had children, and became a very successful veterinarian and university lecturer. He also embarked on a serious study and practice of martial arts. In his late thirties, the death of a loved one caused him to experience a debilitating form of depression that he says, *'set me on a new course, and ultimately, in that new course I eventually included dance into my life…'.* His path to dance included exploring avenues that included stress management courses and groups interested in new age religious practice. A chance encounter with a member of one such group resulted in an invitation to come to a session of Dances of

[103] The fourth plinth is an unoccupied platform in the northwest corner of Trafalgar Square in London, UK. Taken over by the Greater London Authority in 1998, the plinth has since been home to a variety of arts instillations. In 2009, between June and October, the fourth plinth was occupied twenty-four hours a day for one hundred days by various performers and artists.

Universal Peace. He joined the small group and, although challenging, slowly began to allow the enjoyment of moving with others enter his life. His professional work took a turn as well and he became a traditional healing practitioner and stress management coach. He discovered shamanic trance dancing as a part of these practices and included it as a part of both his personal and professional explorations. In addition, Marco also enjoys Tai Chi, country line dancing and Five Rhythms, and says that each of these allows him to let go and '*get lost'* in the movement. Thinking back to the thirteen-year-old that vowed never to dance again, as compared to the dancing adult that he has now become, he muses, *'I don't think he would have believed it. I mean my whole life is completely amazing…my life has been very tough at times…and dance, dance and music have been what saved me'*. (A.1, B.1 & 2, C.2, & 3, 4, D.1, E.1 & 2, F.1)

Matthew is forty-seven years old and currently lives in Mexico. American by birth, he describes himself as a child who was 'stuck in the brain and not the body'. Matthew excelled academically, but had no interest in sports or any other sort of physical activities. He attended an Ivy League university and later moved into a career in investment banking. After a few years, he experienced a breakdown which he partially attributes being disconnected from his physical self. He left the financial sector, and after a year of traveling returned to the States where he worked as a pre-school teacher. He took a movement workshop for early childhood educators which he says began to open his interest in exploring dance further. A local community college offered contained a small dance department, and Matthew participated in any and all classes that were available to him. When these offerings were exhausted, he

moved on to pursue a post graduate degree in dance education. Upon completion of his degree he developed and ran his own business offering dance integrated teaching to a large public school system, and continued to train in choreography, dance education, and notation. Although his opportunities for teaching dance are limited in the small town where he currently lives in Mexico, he has managed to develop a dance class with a group of the local women. When asked what he considers the most important about his experiences with dance, he mentions being able to reconnect mind and body, and the ability to pass that knowledge on to others. (A.1, B.1 & 3, C.3 & 4, D.1 & 3, E.1 & 2, F.1)

Mica is forty-seven years old and lives in London, UK. When reflecting on his life, he did consider himself to be somewhat athletic, but had no interest in dance until he was an adult. Trained as a computer programmer at University, he and some friends happened upon a rock and roll club where they found that they liked both the music and the dancing. They attended events at this club for a short while, but Mica soon discovered Swing dance and says, *'I was hooked!'* He soon developed a large group of friends within the Swing community and found himself going out dancing several nights a week. He even found that over time, he adopted a different style of dress that reflected the retro nature of the dance. Unhappy in his career, when the opportunity for voluntary redundancy was offered, he took it and sold his upscale flat, using the money to open a swing dance school and event company. Although financially unstable for the first few years, Mica never looked back or had any regrets about his decision. Not only has dancing provided him with a thriving business, he also counts his wife and young daughter as benefits that have

come because of his decision to move his life into one that includes dance. He also counts it as his personal mission to help others find the kind of happiness and positive experience with dance that he has been lucky enough to have been able to incorporate into his own life. (A.1, B.3, C.2 & 4, D.1, E.1 & 2, 3, F.4)

Motoko is a forty-year-old journalist who lives in Washington DC, USA. Originally from Japan where during her youth *'dance was non-existent. It just wasn't done'*, she came to the United States to attend graduate school in New York City, eventually moving to Washington in 2011. New to the city, she met up with some friends of friends who were members of a gay cheerleading squad who used hip-hop dancing in their routine. Instantly intrigued by the movement she sought out a local dance school and enrolled in a beginner class. Her class involvement quickly increased to several classes a week, which, because of the expense, caused her to volunteer at the studio in exchange for lessons. After a few years, she auditioned for an adult hip-hop dance company where, originally accepted as an apprentice, she worked '*harder than I ever have in my life'* to become a full member of the company. Through her performances and competitions with this group, she was exposed to the many hip-hop events in the DC area, which she began to videotape and post on YouTube. Her videos became so popular that she eventually started her own web site showcasing the local hip-hop scene. This site, as well as attending as many dance performances as she can afford, is what she feels is her way of '*giving back'* to the dance community that she feels has given her so much. (A.1, B.2, C.2 & 4, D.2. E.1 & 2, F.2)

Nora is twenty-nine years old and currently lives in London, UK. Born and raised in Scotland, she trained and competed as traditional Scottish dancer until her early teens. Interested in becoming a lawyer, she started university with the intention to study political science, but after one year decided it was not the right fit and left. She began working in clubs and bars as both a bartender and an exotic dancer, eventually moving into managerial positions. At one such club she encountered a youth hip hop group, and after a conversation with their leader, began to take classes at the local dance school. This training led her to attend a college course where she was exposed to contemporary dance training. She recalls both instances as containing moments that pushed her forward into seeing dance in a new way. Her teacher at college encouraged her to apply to universities in London, where she eventually completed a BA in dance studies. After university, she continued to work in dance, teaching, choreographing, lighting, and working within community based settings. She admits that it has not been easy, but her love for contemporary dance has carried her through both good and challenging times. She is currently the founder and director of a small dance company that performs and presents workshops within the London community. Both areas are of equal importance to her and fulfil her interests in choreographing as well as working with non-professional dancers. When looking back on her early dance life, she cites the difference as being one related to personal rather than social circumstances. Her competition life was one where dancing was focused on external pursuits, while her current life in dance is about fulfilling a passion and sharing it with others. (A.4, B.1, C.1 & 4, D.1 & 3, E.1, F.1)

Paola is seventy years old and lives in Brighton, UK with her husband Abram. Her dancing as a child was mostly country dancing done in school, but she recalls admiring the Morris dancing as performed by the local men of her community. As a young woman, she was finally able to join a mixed sex Morris side at the University of Sussex, where she met her husband. She joined him in America when he moved to work at a mid-western university, and added Appalachian clog dancing to her repertoire. Upon returning to the UK, she began her own dance company which toured the country, and with her husband, secured arts council funding for performances of both clog and Morris dancing at schools and festivals. Although she also earned a living as a bartender and jewellery artist, soon most of her time was dedicated to dance. An ankle injury later put a stop to her clog and Morris dancing, but she is still very involved in the English country dance community in Brighton. For her recent seventieth birthday, she celebrated with friends at a large dance party. Her greatest wish was to see her husband dance a Morris jig for her, as that was the dance he was doing when he first caught her attention. He was very happy to oblige. (A.1 & 4, B.2, C.2 & 4, D.2. E. 1& 2, 3, F.3)

Parker is a fifty-eight-year-old and lives in a suburb of Washington DC, USA. The son of a Broadway producer, he grew up watching shows from backstage, and spending holidays with stars of stage and screen. But Parker's aspirations were set on changing the world, and he worked at University towards a career in political science and international relations, gaining both a BA and MA on the subject. He then began a career in politics where he spent many years working on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. On a dare from a then girlfriend who was a dancer, he decided to attend a dance

class at a local studio. Totally unaware of what to wear, he showed up in a business suit for a class called Dance Dynamics to which he says, *'I could neither dance, nor was I dynamic'*. Although he considered it one of the most embarrassing moments of his life, '*there was just something'* that brought him back several days later. He began to take more and more dance classes, even performing with some local groups. After several years, a friend proposed that he become the Executive Director of a small company she was forming. The company and position grew and he eventually left his political position and moved into working with the dance company full time. When the artistic director left her position, he assumed that role as well. Many years later the first company ceased operation, but undeterred, Parker began his own group. Primarily a touring company, they travel all over the world serving as cultural ambassadors for the United States. In this way Parker has been able to combine both his love of politics and dance. To this he says, *'I dance because it's how I experience the world…I don't mean by travel, I mean that by life'*. (A.1, B.1, C.2 & 3, 4, D.1, E. 1& 2, F.1)

Pavi is sixty-two years old and lives in India. Interviewed while a visiting lecturer in the UK, she is currently works as a professor in a university dance department. She describes herself as a tomboy when she was young, with no interest in dance. She grew up in a family where professional pursuits such as maths and science were emphasised and was therefore exposed to very little having to do with the arts. She attended Bharatanatyam classes intermittently with her school friends as a teenager, but showed no serious interest. At university, she studied physics and had intentions of pursuing further education in either medicine or law. Part-way through her studies, she vividly

recalls a chance meeting with a woman, whom she later learned was the head of the dance department. So transfixed by her countenance, she begged her parents to let her change her degree programme to dance. They relented, but only if she finished her physics degree as well. She did so, and eventually gained a BA, MA, and PhD in dance (as well as an MA in law). The teacher who inspired her eventually became her mentor, and as a tribute, currently runs a dance company named in her honour. After university, she went on to dance professionally in India, Asia and the United States, and eventually found herself assuming the role of mentor and teacher in the same dance department where she found her inspiration. (A.4, B.1, C.1, D.1 & 3, E.2, F.2)

Perry is fifty-three years old and lives in London, UK. Always artistic, as a child Perry participated in visual arts and drama, and his artistic interests eventually took him into costume and theatre design. His dance experiences as a child were mostly relegated to family parties that often-included Scottish dancing and he especially enjoyed the reels. When he was thirty-two he was at a party where he had to partner someone in a waltz, and although he enjoyed it, was quite uncomfortable. It would be another ten years before he tried ballroom dance again. As his life in the theatre kept him working evenings and weekends, a change in career and difficult breakup found him looking for new activities. His curiosity in salsa dancing was piqued by BBC television advertisements featuring different sorts of dance, and although he took beginning lessons for a while it wasn't the form that kept his attention. Line dancing came next, but he said that when he discovered ballroom dance, '*That's where I found my metier'*. He was invited to a same sex ballroom dance event by a friend, where on the first night he made connections with

other people right away. When he returned the next week he realised that to truly be accepted he would have to spend some time learning the dances, and so enrolled at a local ballroom dance school. From this moment forward he has continued to progress, and participates socially in dance evenings as much as he is able. Dancing has enabled him to return to dating and has greatly increased his social circles. Several times a year he travels to Paris, Scotland, or Copenhagen to attend dance events which he considers to be the highlights of his dancing calendar. Other dance opportunities have included participating in the 2012 London Olympic closing ceremonies, as well as occasionally attending line dance evenings. Forever the social dancer, he is not interested in participating in competitions as he enjoys dancing with those both new and experienced to the ballroom dance floor. About his experience with dance so far he says, *'…it's transformational and just a wonderful experience. It's a friendly group, it's confidence building. I can walk into a room and know that I have a skill…and I can make friends instantly…I think it's a fundamental part of being'*. (A.2, B.3, C.2 & 4, D.2, E.1 & 2, F.1)

Ralph is twenty-five years old and lives in New York City, USA. At the time of the interview he was living in London where he was completing a postgraduate degree in dance. As a young child growing up, he was enrolled for one year in ballet classes and appeared in a local production of the *Nutcracker*. Although he enjoyed the classes and performances, he became aware of the disapproval from particularly the male members of his family and decided to put his physical energies into soccer and other team sports. In high school he participated in theatrical activities and was a very talented percussionist, becoming a member of the All-State Youth Orchestra.

Encouraged by his teachers to pursue music professionally, he was dissuaded by his family who all held professional or business degrees, and he instead chose to study Spanish and education with the goal of becoming a teacher. While at university he was introduced to ballroom dancing by a friend and realised that he was able to pick up the dance material quickly - he claims as a result of his musical background. The next few years were a combination of ballroom dance competitions and university studies, something that changed when he decided to do a semester abroad in Spain. He also admits that his interest in ballroom dance was waning, as the competition circuit was of little interest to him and there were other areas of his life needing his attention. Shortly after arriving, he learned of the death of his first high school boyfriend, who, although the partnership was difficult, had been an important figure in his life, and whose passing dealt a difficult blow. One evening Ralph found himself in a small Spanish bar where flamenco music and dance was being performed and he instantly connected to it and came back night after night. A few months later he returned to New York for his last year of university, he immediately sought out a Flamenco teacher and began taking classes several nights a week. Quickly reaching a high level of proficiency, he applied and won a Fulbright award to study Flamenco in Spain where he stayed for two years immersing himself and honing his skills. He then moved to London where he began post graduate study in dance, focusing on Flamenco and gender studies. (A.4, B.1, C.1 & 4, D.2 & 3, E.1, F.2)

Rebecca is thirty years old and lives in Newcastle on Tyne, UK. Always interested in the arts, she participated in theatre and music as a child, and majored in visual art at University. She says that she always admired dance and dancers, but didn't ever have the opportunity to participate when she was younger. As a teenager Rachael struggled with anorexia and had a few short stays in residential treatments centres. It was during one of these sessions that she encountered a dance therapist who gave her a book about five rhythms and its creator Gabrielle Roth. Although inspired, she was not comfortable enough with her body to engage with the movement at that time. A few years later her current partner took her to a Five Rhythms session on their first date. She describes the experience as being life changing, enabling her to begin to '*reconnect what had been disconnected*'. Over the next few years she continued attending Five Rhythms sessions, and added other similar improvisatory forms such as Heart Awakening, and Shakti Women's Circle[104]. To her, the dance classes are not just a form of exercise, but form the foundation for what she sees as a healthy lifestyle. Her attitude towards her body has transformed from one of disgust and loathing, to one where self-care and self-love have been rediscovered. (A.2 & 3, B.2, C.1 & 2, 3, 4, D.2, E.1 & 3, F.1)

[104] See appendix (?) on dance styles.

Richard is sixty-eight years old and currently lives in London, UK. Although he states that he only participated in social dance as a teenager, later in life he became passionate about dance, especially ballet, and offered financial support to companies in the United States and the England. A retired accountant, Richard lived and worked in Europe, the Middle East, and later, the United States, where he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, an illness which he attributes to the breakup of his marriage, and the eventual loss of several businesses. He relocated back to London, where through his doctor he learned about the Dance for Parkinson's programme sponsored by English National Ballet, and has been a member of the programme for many years. It has reignited his passion for ballet and he has returned to attending performances on a regular basis. The programme, he says, is one where people with Parkinson's can come together as a community and not worry if they are '*wobbly on their feet'*. They all share a common experience and are welcome to just come as they are. Through the dance classes and other activities for people with Parkinson's, he rediscovered joy in living, and has become what he refers to as, '*a very happy Parkie'*. (A.2, B.2, C.2 & 4, E.1, F.3)

Sharon is forty-six years old and lives in Basingstoke, UK. At the time of the interview, Sharon was in the final stages of working towards ordination as a priest in the Church of England. As a young adult, she took a variety of dance classes at University, and although she loved it, believed that she didn't have the correct physical body, or the talent needed to take it further. After graduating, she left dancing and moved into a life as a wife and mother. Many years later when her children were school age, as a way of getting out and escaping the stressors of motherhood for a short while, she began to once again seek out dance opportunities. Her strong religious background took her to liturgical dance classes, which wasn't quite what she was looking for, and eventually to sacred circle dance where she found both the dance and community that were the correct fit. She mentions several meaningful moments with dance, each one moving her into new levels of awareness. The first spurred her into further exploring sacred circle dance, the second and third acted as moments of confirmation that she should enter the seminary and study for the priesthood. Although she has used dancing in small ways with her current congregation, she says that it mostly shows up in the ways she moves when she is giving her sermons. She still actively participates with several sacred circle dance groups and cites its importance in her life as the way in which she is able to actively '*pray with her body*'. (A.4, B.3, C.3 & 4, D.2, F.2)

Taylor is seventy-five years old and lives in London, UK. As a teenager, he says that his dancing was confined to a little ballroom or jive, but only in contexts where there was a possibility of attracting a member of the opposite sex. It wasn't about the '*thrill of dance'*, but seemed more about a form of courtship exercise. He says, *'…the thrill of dance came much later, and is much more recent'*. Taylor married and had children, and spent several years as a member of the clergy, moving later into counselling within university settings. His life changed when he and his wife separated and later divorced and he found himself in circumstances where he was quite lonely and needing a new community. He began taking yoga, and the leader, who also taught tango lessons, invited him to come to some classes. '*The rest'*, he says '*is history, and that led to [becoming] slightly obsessed…'* He began attending classes three or four times per week, staying out very late, even on nights where he had to work the next morning. Eventually meeting a group of people who planned and met each other at events, they referred to themselves as, '*The Tango Gang'*. His obsessional phase with tango lasted for about five or six years, after which he decided to attend fewer classes and move into sponsoring tango events. He and a friend began to DJ for small tango events and eventually worked their way up to larger events and spaces in London. On a tango holiday to Greece, he met his current partner in both life and dance. When considering what tango has meant to him over the years he says, '*It's multi-layered – social, and art form, music…coming together…which are quite fulfilling really…It always stimulates. Now I think it's something inside me. It's part of me, and it will always be there'*. (A.2, B.3, C.2 & 4, D.1, E.1, F.3)

Valerie is twenty-eight years old and lives in London, UK. As a child, Valerie participated in dance classes, but left it when she reached puberty and suddenly became aware of her changing body, choosing instead to study acting. While at university it was discovered that she had a serious health issue which required that she have her thyroid removed. Although she fully recovered, medication and fatigue were a constant reminder of what would have to be dealt with for the rest of her life. A role in a production of *Romeo and Juliet* set in Argentina introduced her to tango and she says from the first rehearsal she realised, '*Oh my God this is it…this is my thing. This is what I want to do!'* Six weeks later when the show closed, Valerie purchased a ticket to Buenos Aires where she had only the address of a former colleague and a recommendation for a tango school. Within a few weeks she was immersed in the tango scene taking classes during the day, and attending milongas at night. Continually extending her trip to keep dancing, she finally had to return to London to have access to her prescription medication, but she later returned to continue her adventure. Upon her eventual return to the UK she found that the tango scene was very different to what she had experienced in Buenos Aires, and over time she stopped dancing. A year later a chance meeting with a playwright, brought her back to tango when they collaborated on creating a play from blog postings about her experiences in Argentina. Through its creation she reconnected with a private tango instructor and rekindled her passion for dance. She now regularly attends milongas in London, as well as traveling to other countries for tango workshops. (A.4, B.1 & 2, C.3 & 4, D.2, E.1, F.1)

Veronica is thirty-seven years old and lives in London, UK. Originally from Poland, she was involved in piano lessons as a child, but only danced at school in physical education classes. Relocating with her mother to the UK when she was a teenager, she currently works as an independent contractor specialising in corporate human resources. Veronica was introduced to dance at her gym, where a local studio offered ballroom dance classes, and after watching them for a few weeks she finally asked if she could join. This led to her continued study outside of the gym, and she began attending classes and socials several times a week. As well as taking classes, Veronica has also begun to take her ballroom dance medal exams, and has passed the bronze level qualification. Awarded both a medal and a certificate, she states that these unequivocally prove that she does not have '*two left feet'*. Passionate about all forms of dance, she has a long list of types she would like to try, and says that if work commitments keep her from attending classes, she says that her body gets restless and she finds herself, *'…practicing the rumba by the copy machine, or going over the steps when I wait for the bus…I dance whenever I can!'* Veronica says that she was once told that to master something, you must do it for at least 10,000 hours[105]. Considering this, she has kept track of exactly the number of hours she has danced, and says that she still has a long way to go. But this doesn't worry her as she hopes to continue dancing well into old age. She says, *'I haven't had my share of dancing yet…I want to be one of those old grannies who dances into the grave'.* (A.4, B.1, C.2 & 3, 4, D.2, E.2, F.1)

[105] In his book *Outliers (*2008) author Malcolm Gladwell studied the lives of individuals who he considered to have achieved high levels of success and determined from this that it takes approximately ten thousand hours to master a field.

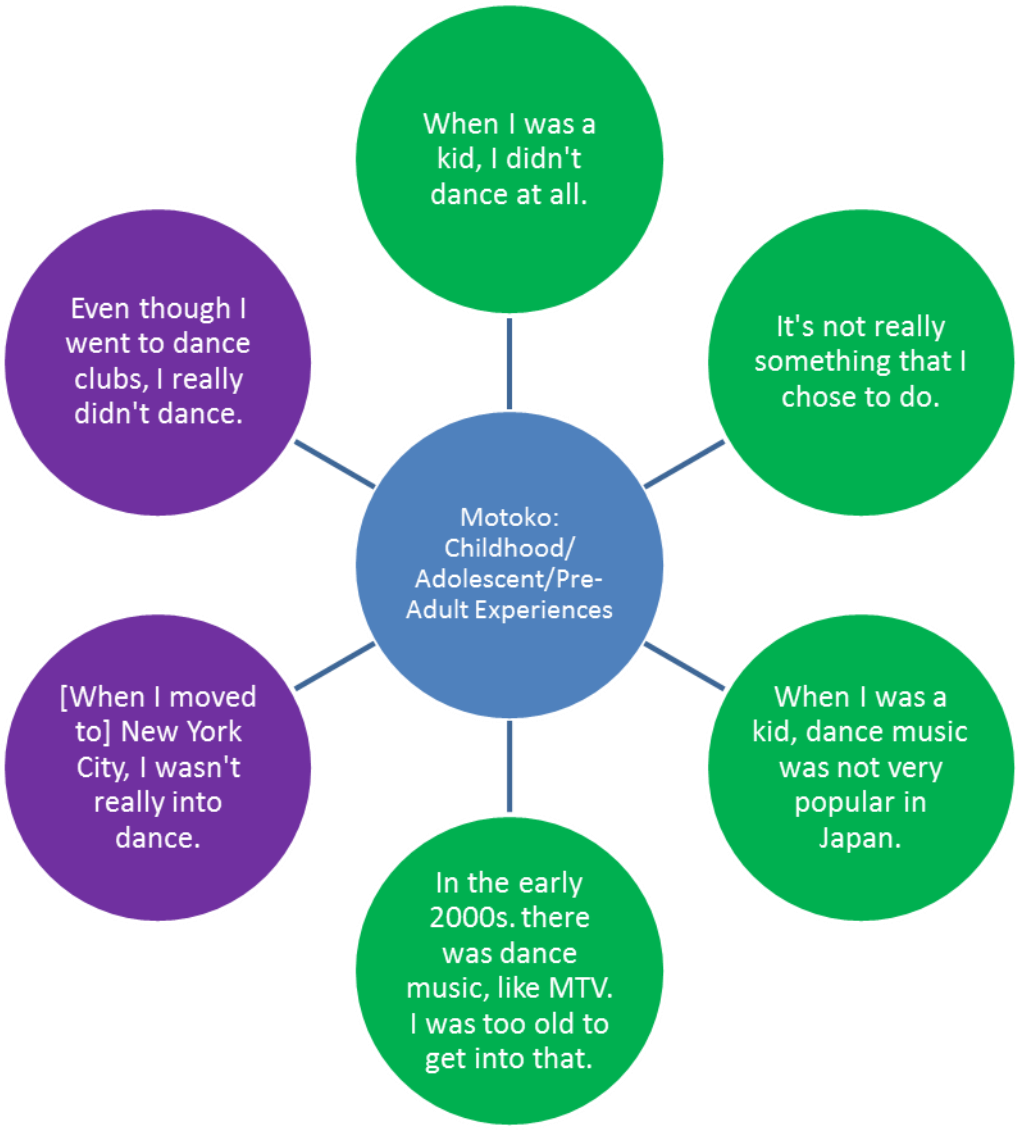
Appendix F – Constellation Chart Examples

Delia, 59: USA

Delia, 59: USA


Delia: Adult Experience
I took a dance composition class [in college].
It was in that composition class that I became inspired!
The teacher was named Carol...She did a movement. There was a look in her eye and I knew then, I was nineteen - I wanted that!
I remembered that movement...She was on her kneed and was doing this gorgeous arm circle...It was in her expression - what I saw in her eyes - that spoke to me.
She [Carol] said . 'You ought to be a choreographer!'. and I said, 'Really? Ok! How I do that?'
It was spiritual for me. It's always been spiritual for me. I think that's why I have such longevity... The spiritual aspect of the movement has carried me for many years.
I studeid ballet every day. I studied modern every day. I had anatomy....I was in with the twelve year olds, but also with the adults.
We started our own company...I was teaching at [a] college, then I started my own dance studio.
I dance/I move.
Dance , to me, is movement. It's energy. It's connecting to the Universe. I can't define it in one word.
Dance is a way to let the light come out in you. It's a way to FIND the light. It might take you a whole life to get there, bit at least you see it.

Motoko, 40: Japan/USA



Motoko, 40: Japan/USA

Matthew, 47: USA

Matthew, 47: USA

Appendix G – Participant Information and Response Charts

(Participants are listed in order of interview dates)

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Residence	Race	Date Interviewed	Interview Format	Place Met/Interviewed
Cathy	40	F	UK/Spain	White	27/02/14	In-person	Barnes, London
Lucy	69	F	UK	White	31/01/14	In-person	Roehampton, London
Richard	68	M	UK	White	08/02/14	In-person	Islington London
Calvin	79	M	UK	White	08/03/14	In-person	Camden, London
Pavi	62	F	India	Indian	03/05/14	In-person	Roehampton, London
Sharon	46	F	UK	White	03/11/14	In-person	Roehampton, London
Ralph	25	M	USA	White	30/01/14	In-person	Roehampton, London
Nora	29	F	UK	White	08/01/14	In-person	Roehampton, London
Delia	59	F	USA	White	27/08/14	Skype	Skype - Baltimore-London
Celine	32	F	USA	White	27/08/14	Skype	Skype - Virginia - London
Guang	45	M	USA	Chinese-American	09/01/14	Skype	Skype - Bethesda - London
Motoko	40	F	USA/Japan	Japanese	09/09/14	Skype	Skype -Washington DC-London
Matthew	47	M	USA/Mexico	White	09/01/14	Skype	Skype - London- La Paz
Parker	58	M	USA	White	09/13/14	Skype	Skype -Washington DC-London
Darren	46	M	USA	White	12/03/14	Skype	Florida
Laura	63	F	UK	White	01/10/14	In-person	Ealing Broadway, London, UK
Geoffrey	70	M	UK	White	#N/A	In-person	Western Hartfordshire, UK

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Residence	Race	Date Interviewed	Interview Format	Place Met/Interviewed
Micah	47	M	UK	White	10/05/15	In-person	Newcastle on Tyne
Rebecca	30	F	UK	White	01/04/15	Skype	Newcastle on Tyne
Malcolm	68	M	UK	White	06/04/15	Skype	Newcastle on Tyne
Mallory	51	F	UK/Belgium	White	09/04/15	Skype	Newcastle on Tyne
Abram	63	M	UK	White	10/04/15	In-person	Brighton, UK
Paula	69	F	UK	White	10/04/15	In-person	Brighton, UK
Sylvester	53	M	UK	White	10/04/15	In-person	Brighton, UK
Marco	67	M	UK	White	23/04/15	In-person	Richmond Park, London, UK
Valerie	28	F	UK	White	25/04/15	Skype	Victoria Park, London, UK
Carys	28	F	UK	White	01/05/15	In-person	Fulham Palace, London, UK
Cedric	54	M	UK/Ireland	White	06/05/15	In-person	Roehampton, London UK
Deklen	40	M	Germany/Italy	White	14/05/15	Skype	Skype - Berlin, Germany
Gregory	67	M	UK	White	15/05/15	In-person	Colliers Wood, London, UK
Daniel	30	M	UK	British/Sri Lankan	22/05/15	In-person	Southbank Centre, London, UK

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Residence	Race	Date Interviewed	Interview Format	Place Met/Interviewed
Dean	60	M	UK	White	09/07/15	In-person	Harrow, London, UK
Kade	52	F	UK/USA	White	14/07/15	Skype	New York, USA
Laina	40	F	USA	White	16/07/15	Skype	London, UK
Taylor	75	M	UK	White	20/07/15	In-person	London, UK
Jessica	60	M	UK	White	30/07/15	In-person	London, UK
Perry	53	M	UK	White	31/07/15	In-person	London, UK
Veronica	37	F	UK/Poland	White	12/09/15	Skype	London, UK

Pseudonym	Occupation	Dance Form	Childhood/Adolescent Dance
Cathy	Catholic Nun	Sacred Circle	No
Lucy	PhD Dance Student/Lawyer	Folk Dance	Dance Lessons
Richard	Accountant (Retired)	Dance for Parkinson's	No
Calvin	Military Officer/Catholic Priest (Retired)	Contemporary	Ballroom Dance at Military School
Pavi	Professor of Dance	Bharatanatyam	Some Bharatanatyam
Sharon	Anglican Vicar	Sacred Circle	University Classes
Ralph	MA Dance Student/Spanish Teacher	Flamenco	Ballet Age Seven/Ballroom (Uni)
Nora	Director, Dance Company	Contemporary	Scottish Highland Dance
Delia	Choreographer and Dance Teacher	Contemporary	One Year of Classes Age Five
Celine	Singer and Music Teacher	Swing/West Coast Swing	No
Guang	Military IT Specialist	West Coast Swing	No
Motoko	Journalist	Hip Hop	No
Matthew	Dance Artist/Educator/ESL Teacher	Hip Hop	No
Parker	Artistic Director – Contemporary Dance Company	Contemporary/Improv	No
Darren	Artistic Director – Wheelchair Dance Company	Contemporary	No

Pseudonym	Occupation	Dance Form	Childhood/Adolescent Dance
Laura	Special Education Teacher (Retired)	Wheelchair Dance	No
Geoffrey	Social Worker/Lecturer (Retired)	Contemporary/Improv	Recreational
Micah	Owner – Swing Dance School	Contemporary/Improv	No
Rebecca	Librarian/Visual Artist	Swing Dance	One Year of Classes Age Eight or Nine
Malcolm	Business Owner (Retired)/Yoga Teacher	Five Rhythms	Recreational
Mallory	Nature Advisor	Five Rhythms	Recreational
Abram	Astrophysicist	Five Rhythms	No
Paula	Visual Artist/Dance Teacher/Administrator	Morris Dance	Country Dance at School
Sylvester	University Librarian	Morris Dance/Clogging	School/Recreational
Marco	Veterinarian (Retired)/Natural Healer	Morris Dance	No
Valerie	Actress	Shamanic Dance	School/Recreational
Carys	Historic Preservation Architect	Tango	One Year of Classes
Cedric	Co-Facilitator/Integrated Dance Company	Swing Dance	At School
Deklen	Medical Physicist/Tango Salon Owner	Contemporary/Improv	No
Gregory	Designer/Farmer/English Teacher (Retired)	Tango	No

Pseudonym	**Occupation**	**Dance Form**	**Childhood/Adolescent Dance**
Daniel	Manager, Dance-wear Store	Ballroom Dance	Danced at Church/Some Lessons
Dean	RAF/Financial Trader/Ballroom Dance School Owner	Vogue Fem	No
Kade	Ballroom Dance Teacher/Qi Gong Teacher	Ballroom Dance	Recreational
Laina	Professional Classical Pianist	Ballroom Dance/Tango	Gymnastics
Taylor	University Counselor (Retired)/Ballroom Dance DJ	Ballroom Dance	Recreational
Jessica	Librarian/Dance Fit Teacher/Ballroom Dance DJ	Tango	Small Amount in Theatre Productions
Perry	Theatre Designer	Ballroom Dance	Scottish Country Dance
Jessica	Librarian/Dance Fit Teacher/Ballroom Dance DJ	Tango	Small Amount in Theatre Productions
Perry	Theatre Designer	Ballroom Dance	Scottish Country Dance
Veronica	Human Resources	Ballroom Dance	Recreational

Pseudonym	Friends & Family Reaction	New Community	Desire to Give Back
Cathy	Criticised for Leaving a Steady Profession	Yes	No
Lucy	Friends Understand/World Give It Up If Asked by Church	Yes	Yes
Richard	If it's good for the disease…'	Yes	No
Calvin	Friends See How Happy it Makes Him	Yes	Yes
Pavi	Family Insisted She Complete Degrees in Physics & Law First	Yes	Yes
Sharon	They Know it is An Important Part of Her Life/Career	Somewhat Yes	No
Ralph	Only one not to be in Law/Med. Not really talked about	Somewhat Yes	No
Nora	Mother Feels Great Pride – But Doesn't Understand	Yes	Yes
Delia	They Have Accepted That It Is Who I Am	Yes	Yes
Celine	They Know That It Is a Part of Her Life. Sister Very Proud!	Yes	No
Guang	Parents Don't Understand. New Wife Tries to Understand	Yes	Yes
Motoko	It's Not a Part of Japanese Life	Yes	Yes
Matthew	Family Doesn't Quite Understand	Yes	Yes
Parker	Friends Thought Him Crazy for Leaving Government Work!	Yes	Yes

Pseudonym	Friends & Family Reaction	New Community	Desire to Give Back
Darren	Family Doesn't Quite Understand, but are Supportive	Yes	Yes
Laura	Family Very Proud	Yes	Yes
Geoffrey	Family Doesn't Really Understand	Yes	Yes
Micah	All Friends Are Dancers!	Yes	Yes
Rebecca	Took Mom to a Class - Dad/Family Doesn't Understand	Yes	Yes
Malcolm	Wife Tolerates	Yes	Yes
Mallory	Family Doesn't Really Understand	Yes	Yes
Abram	Work People Didn't Really Know/Met Wife While Dancing	Yes	Yes
Paula	Family and Friends Very Supportive/Met Husband Dancing	Yes	No
Sylvester	Wife/Son don't care/Father is proud	Yes	Yes
Marco	Children/Outside Friends Don't Understand	Yes	Yes
Valerie	Family Thinks It's a Bit Weird	Yes	No
Carys	Family/Friends Think It's a Bit Weird	Yes	Yes
Cedric	Wife Wishes He Made More Money	Yes	Yes

Pseudonym	Friends & Family Reaction	New Community	Desire to Give Back
Deklen	Mostly Created a New Set of Friends - Old Don't Understand	Yes	Yes
Gregory	Sons Think 'Its Just Dad'	Yes	Yes
Daniel	Doing 'That Gay Dance' – Says His Mom	Yes	Yes
Dean	Sons/Wife Love That He is Happy	Yes	Yes
Kade	Family and Friends Very Supportive	Somewhat Yes	Yes
Laina	Old Friends Don't Understand/New Friends Are All Dancers	Yes	Yes
Taylor	Sons Think It's Great/Met New Partner	Yes	Yes
Jessica	All Friends Are Dancers!/Met Partner While Dancing	Yes	No
Perry	Family Doesn't Quite Understand	Yes	Yes
Veronica	Family Doesn't Quite Understand	Yes	Yes

Pseudonym	Reaction to 'I Dance"	Extraordinary Encounter	Life Change or Crisis Before Encounter	Dance 'Addiction'
Cathy	Yes - Tears	Yes	No	Yes
Lucy	Yes - Pause	Yes	No	Yes
Richard	No	No	Parkinson's Disease Diagnosis	No
Calvin	Yes - Pause	Yes	Retirement	Yes
Pavi	Yes - Pause/Tears	Yes	No	Yes
Sharon	Yes - Pause	Yes	No	Yes
Ralph	Yes - Pause/Tears	Yes	Death of a Boyfriend	Yes
Nora	No	Yes	Left University	Yes
Delia	Yes - Pause	Yes	No	Yes
Celine	Yes - Pause/Tears	Yes	Depression/Abuse as a Child	Yes
Guang	Pause	No	Recent Divorce	Yes
Motoko	Yes - Pause	No	Relocation - NYC to DC	Yes
Matthew	yes - Pause	Yes	Depression/Relocation	Yes
Parker	Yes - Pause	Yes	No	Yes

Pseudonym	Reaction to 'I Dance"	Extraordinary Encounter	Life Change or Crisis Before Encounter	Dance 'Addiction'
Darren	Yes - Pause/Emotion	Yes	Diving Accident/Drug Abuse	Yes
Laura	Not really	Yes	No	Yes
Micah	Yes	Yes	No	No
Rebecca	Pause	Yes	Anorexia – Hospitalisation	Yes
Malcolm	Yes	Yes	Divorce	No
Mallory	No	Yes	Relocation/Death of Father	Yes
Abram	Pause	No	No	Yes
Paula	No	No	No	Yes
Sylvester	Pause	No	No	Yes
Marco	Pause	Yes	Death of a Love One/Depression	No
Valerie	No	Yes	Thyroid Removal	Yes
Carys	Smile	No	Recovery from Serious Pneumonia	Yes
Cedric	Yes	Yes	Thyroid Removal	Yes
Deklen	Smile	No	Relocation/Relationship Break Up	Yes

Pseudonym	Reaction to 'I Dance"	Extraordinary Encounter	Life Change or Crisis Before Encounter	Dance 'Addiction'
Gregory	Yes - smile	No	No	Yes
Daniel	No	Yes	Realisation of Being Homosexual	Yes
Dean	No	Yes	No	Yes
Kade	Yes	Yes	Work Crisis/Difficult Life Circumstance	Yes
Taylor	No	No	Divorce	Yes
Jessica	Pause	Yes	Death of Young Husband	Yes
Perry	Pause	Yes	Change of Profession	Yes
Veronica	No	Yes	Death of Grandmother/Depression	Yes

Pseudonym	Reason For Starting Current Dance 'Journey'	Serious Study/Degree	Made Dance Their Profession
Cathy	Viewing of a Ballet Performance	Yes - MA/PhD	Yes – PhD Candidate
Lucy	Local Sacred Circle Dance Group	Yes - Germany	No
Richard	Doctor Recommendation – Parkinson's' Disease Dance Group	No	No
Calvin	Signed up for a Dance Class for 60th Birthday	Yes - MA	Yes – Professional Dancer
Pavi	Took Classes/Inspired By Teacher	Yes - MA/PhD	Yes – Head of Dance Department
Sharon	Sacred Circle Dance Class & Teacher	No	No
Ralph	Flamenco Performance	Yes - MA	No
Nora	Inspired By A Teacher & Dance Group	Yes – BA	Yes – Dance Company Director
Delia	University Dance Class &Teacher	Yes – BA/MA	Yes – Dance Teacher
Celine	Invited By a Friend to Swing Dance	No	No
Guang	Viewed Hip Hop Dance Videos	Yes	No
Motoko	Suggestion by Cheerleading Friends	Yes - Workshops	No
Matthew	Took a University Dance Class	Yes - MA	Yes – Dance Integrated Educator
Parker	Took a Dance Class on a Dare From His Girlfriend	Yes	Yes – Artistic Director

Pseudonym	Reason For Starting Current Dance 'Journey'	Serious Study/Degree	Made Dance Their Profession
Darren	Answered An Ad For Dancers at the VA Hospital	Yes	Yes – Dancer/Teacher
Laura	Took a Workshop For Special Education Teachers	Yes	Yes - Part Time Teacher
Geoffrey	Drove His Daughter to a Rehearsal and Joined the Group	Yes	No
Micah	Went to a Class With Friends	No	Yes – Swing Dance School Owner
Rebecca	Dance Therapist/Taken to Class on a Date	No	No
Malcolm	Went to a Yoga Retreat/Taken to Five Rhythms Class by a Friend	Yes - Study	Yes - Part Time Teacher
Mallory	Saw a Flyer and Attended a Five Rhythms Class	No	No
Abram	Went to a Morris Dance Class With Friends at University	Yes	Yes - Part Time Teacher
Paula	Joined a Ladies Morris Dance Group	No	Yes – Teacher/Company Director
Sylvester	Introduced to Morris Dance by Father	Yes	No
Marco	Taken to a Dances of Universal Peace Session by a Friend	Yes	Yes – Teacher
Valerie	Took Tango Lessons for a Play Preparation	No	No
Carys	Introduced to Swing dance by a boyfriend	No	No
Cedric	Working with people with special needs - took a workshop	Yes	Yes – Teacher/Administrator

Pseudonym	**Reason For Starting Current Dance 'Journey'**	**Serious Study/Degree**	**Made Dance Their Profession**
Deklen	Photographed Dancers/Offered Tango Lessons by a Friend	Yes	Yes – Tango Dance Salon
Gregory	Wife Wanted to Take Ballroom Dance Lessons	No	Yes - Part Time Teacher
Daniel	Saw Someone Voguing at a Club	Yes	Yes – Dance Store/Teacher
Dean	Took Lessons With His Wife	No	Yes – Studio Owner
Kade	Free Dance Class Offer From a Local Ballroom Dance Studio	Yes	Yes – Full Tine Dance Teacher
Laina	Signed Up for Ballroom Classes to Salvage a Relationship	Yes	No
Taylor	Yoga teacher invitation to Tango class/New community needs	No	Yes – Dance DJ
Jessica	Scooped Up' and Taken to Class by a Local Dance Teacher	Yes	Yes – Teacher/Dance DJ
Perry	Invited By a Friend to a Same Sex Ballroom Dance Night	No	No
Veronica	Saw A Ballroom Dance at Her Gym	No	No

Appendix H – Interview Transcript Examples

Name: Jessica
Age: 60
Raised: Southwest London
Currently lives: London
Interviewed: In person/30 July, 2015

DW: Before we talk about dance, I'd just like you to tell me what you feel would be of interest about you, outside of your life in dance.

J: Well…I'm a librarian for starters. And I do a lot of networking through my job there. I'm a lesbian and came out when I was thirty. I didn't start dancing until I was an adult. Maybe 24 or something like that. And, one of my main social areas has been with drama groups. I've been doing performances. I love performing. And that also fits into my library work because I'm an outreach worker, so I do lots of telling stories and telling people about the library, and getting people to see how important libraries are. So, that's my job. I've been in a partnership for 22 years and, yeah, that's it really.

DW: Talk to me about what your relationship to dance was when you were younger.

J: I was the most uncoordinated child you ever came across. I didn't do any dancing, I couldn't run. I was very hyper-mobile, but like a lot of people who are dancers, I'm very hyper-mobile. So therefore, I was quite awkward and didn't coordinate myself properly at all. So, I did zilch, but I did have a relationship to music. I studied the piano, and I went to college from school…to train as a music teacher. But not really, physically related to that. Nothing physically related to that.

DW: So, let's move into how you got started with dance. What brought you to dancing as an adult?

J: I had bereavement in my life when I was about 23, and I joined the local Cheapford operatic and dramatic society. And in that atmosphere I did various shows. Oklahoma, (etc.) and because I was one of the young ones, they encouraged me to dance. There was a dance teacher there who recognized that I was sort of in distress. My husband died when I was 22 so I was lost and everything. So, she scooped me up and said, 'come to my dance classes'. And really that – it was an emotional…basically when you dance, you are concentrating so much on where you're putting your feet, that you can't think about any troubles. So that's how I really started, and I did some ballet exams, some tap dancing exams, and some stage exams – as an adult…

DW: What did you think when she said, ‘come along to dance?’ Especially when you didn’t do that a lot when you were younger.

J: Well I guess I was just up for anything really. I was all just part…I just decided that I was going to take any opportunities that life brings me so I just, I was game to do anything really.

DW: So you mentioned ballet and you mentioned tap and you mentioned theatre dancing. Was there any style that you like more than another?

J: I liked the tap dancing really. Because of the rhythm, and because it was more showy somehow.

DW: So, you started taking the different kinds of classes and you were in your mid-20s, where did it go from there?

J: Actually, what happened really was that I had continued doing shows, but I was never a soloist. I was more of a performer sort of person. And obviously I became proficient, and I continued with stage dancing. And basically I came out, and at that time it was ’85, ’86, and I think in this whole gay world, showing off and dancing was not…it might be for the men, it wasn’t… the thing to do. So, I sort of lost the connection with that whole side of things. But I missed the whole performing element. So, at that time I became…I forgot to say that that at the beginning. I became a DJ in 1980, since 1980. I started DJ-ing…before I came out and then continued. And then I was…I went with a friend…who said ‘I’m going to this dance class do you want to come?’. I said, ‘Yeah. I love dancing’, because by that I’d got a love for it then. And it was a ballroom Latin class and I went along, and everybody was really friendly and they encouraged me to…You know, within the gay world, everybody changes partners all the time. It’s not like the ballroom dancing where all the women will sit in a row and the men will…it’s very different in same gender dancing. Anyone can follow, anyone can lead, anyone can ask anyone to dance. So, it’s free of those restrictions. And I really enjoyed it and have been doing it ever since.

DW: Was that at Kade’s studio?...

J: No, No, No. It was at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre…There was a guy called [name of teacher]… who used to teach there…He’s German and came to London and was a dance teacher in those days. He didn’t know Kade at that point, but later they became partners. That’s my connection with Kade.

He started the first gay and lesbian class in 1989 in London. And so, once I'd got…Once I became sort of very familiar with that world, I then decided to concentrate my DJ-in on ballroom and Latin dancing. So, I became a specialist DJ for ballroom and Latin dancing.

DW: And what kind of music had you been doing before?

J: Just general parties, weddings. You know, just general '80s music. My era was '80s. By the time 1992 came I'd started to specialize and I've been doing that ever since basically.

DW: Wow! I never thought that you would need a specialist DJ for ballroom and Latin dancing.

J: There's only eight of us in the country…I've DJ-ed at the Festival Hall, I DJ regularly at the [name of venue] once a month. And I run the [name of] Dance Club which I got together… because the Lesbian and Gay Centre closed up, and there was no venue so we decided to form a partnership and run a club called the [name of club]. And we've been doing that since 1996.

DW: And what is that?

J: It's a club for LGBTQ people and their friends. So, we have a mixture…It's a club on a Sunday afternoon, two Sundays a month to teach…[name of teacher] teaches advanced, intermediate, and beginners, and then I take over and do the DJ-ing for four hours for people to dance. And it's been running for nearly 20 years now.

DW: This is what I love…I've met the most interesting people and find out about the most interesting things. Alright, so go back to when you first kind of…you discovered ballroom. How often were you going to take class?

J: The classes, it was very similar…once a week on a Sunday afternoon. So, you came along and did your classes from one to three. Everyone hopped off socially and had a nice cup of tea locally, and then you would come back and you dance. And then it would turn into a disco night afterwards. There would be two or three hours of ballroom, and then it became a disco night. And then when that closed, I took over… and as I say, we start lessons at 2:00, and finish at 4:30. And now of course, I don't get to dance because I', Dj-ing. I'm watching.

But I also became a member of the same sex competitive dancing scene. And I've been doing that since 1998. We went to Amsterdam for the Gay Games. The Gay Games is something that…so there's every kind of sport, not just dancing. There's hockey, and football and everything. And there were thirty thousand gay people taking part at the Gay Games in Amsterdam in 1998. It was the most inspiring experience I've ever had. There were six hundred same sex dance couples.

DW: All doing ballroom.

J: Ballroom and Latin. There were seven levels – A to F. The ones in the A level would be professional dancers and teachers, and the ones at F level would be the beginners just doing the basic steps. And so the standard goes (makes a motion going up with her hand) and I've been doing that…And so I don't often to get to dance socially because I'm the DJ… So, I do my dancing with my partner now, and I dance…we have two, two-hour practices per week, I have a lesson one time per week, and I'm part of a gay formation team and we practice two hours per week. So, all together I dance eight hours a week.

DW: But it sounds like eight pretty intense hours per week.

J: Oh no…there's a lot of social. There's a lot of chit chatting going on in between. Plus my [name of fitness programme]. Because that's ballroom dancing…

DW: Yeah. Tell me more about this.

J: It was devised by the professionals from Strictly Come Dancing, Ian and Natalie Lowe, along with Mark Foster who is an Olympic swimmer. And it's only been going, not even two years yet. It was devised as a sort of dance, a bit like Zumba, but it's taking all the steps from ballroom and Latin dances, and turning them into an exercise class. You do Cha Cha, Rumba, Quick Step, Fox Trot, all of the dances, but you do it in trainers. And there's quite a lot of jumping…

DW: And with or without a partner?

J: Without a partner…You can Google it. There's now 15, 000 instructors across the country. They're trying to make it like Zumba – a lot of money. And I'm just one of the instructors. So, you pay for the name and all the merchandise, and then you hire a hall and you get people in to do the…I've

been doing it for a year and three quarters. So, I do that five times a week as well.

DW: So, we're adding that on to the hours.

J: (Both laughing) I've just about got time to go to work!

DW: I was just going to say! Alright…Lets back up a little bit. So, you went to the ballroom dance…and how did you find that different than your first experiences with dance, with the teacher who gathered you up?

J: Um…They were quite similar in a way. Emotionally quite similar. Because you have somebody who is quite generous. Both teachers I had were very generous in their nature, and they want to give you the most tips as possible to make you the best. Not all teachers are like that. They limit the number and kinds of tips they give you because they want you to keep coming back and learning. And I don't find that so attractive. So, I found that very attractive that this guy was totally generous, totally enthusiastic. And, also for me, it was the having contact, the close contact between gay people – men and women…where the sexual element doesn't come into it. But you can still play a little bit. Play a little, flirt a little, you know. But it's very safe is the thing. It's very safe. But I believe that the same sex world is even safe than the wider world. Because I've been to some salsa nights where it's a bit of a pick up joint. You know, to me, that's not a safe environment. There's a sort of standard of behaviour in that comes with that environment that is respectful. Being respectful of your space, but at the same time exploring moving together, and sharing... sharing the same aim you know… There's two different ways of looking at it; our club is defiantly a social dancing club. Hardly anybody comes as a pair, and that's the difference between going to a general ballroom dance where you've got mainly older people who are more traditional. Everybody comes as an individual, and you talk about leaders and followers instead of male and female holds. You have…leaders on this side and followers on this side and they can be of either gender. And so, in the class, basically you learn a few steps, and then they say to take a partner, and then you dance those few steps with that partner. So, you're always meeting new people. So, the other thing is, in my DJ-ing world, I do quite a few, what you call, sequence dances where you'll change partners. So, you've got this big circle and everybody moves around wanting to dance a few steps with people. And what's evolved out of that is an incredible amount of tolerance between the gay and the straight people. Because you have a couple in their 70's – their late 70's who come together…and they do their waltz and they generally stick to the same partner because that's what they are used to. And then they get into the sequence dance and suddenly this old guy, he's lost his wife partner and he has a very young gay man on the end of

his arm. So, he has to do the dance…And everybody completely blasé, and not batting an eyelid.

DW: So, one of the things that I am curious about is…some of the people have spoken about a very distinct moment…kind of an aha! moment… with their experiences with dance. Have you had anything like that?

J: (Thinking) I think the time really would be my experience at the competition in Amsterdam. I already knew a few steps obviously, but I was totally a beginner. And my partner, we were both leaders. Now this is a very interesting relationship between being a leader and being a follower because the leader has to control what you do. Some people are naturally more leaders, and some people are naturally more followers. And it doesn't necessarily follow that men and women are in the right role. They are over half the time in the wrong way, because half the time the men have had nil experience of dancing as a child, so therefore they are very beginner-y. And women more often have had some dance experience as a child, so therefore they are better at leading than the men. That's why the same sex [dance] world is attractive to some straight people because the men can relax. As long as they are comfortable in that environment, they can relax and just go, I'll follow then.

DW: I've been in quite a few situations where I have had to be the leader.

J: Well in my dance world, it's perfectly natural for anyone to choose anyone. It's really very liberating.

DW: In lots of other countries men dance with men, and so forth and no one things a thing about it. There is an interchange that is normal…It's just about the dance.

J: I have a little…somebody asked me two or three years ago…what my aim was in life. My actual life aim. And I think I will have achieved something when there is an all-male couple on Strictly Come Dancing.

DW: Has there been?

J: Not yet. Not in England. In Austria yes, and in Israel.

DW: I forget that they have it in other countries. Because in the States it's called Dancing with the Stars.

J: That programme happens in practically every country.

J: So, just going back to my dancing, because obviously, I'm observing quite a lot because I'm DJ-ing. I was about to describe my second moment, which was in Amsterdam. I had to change to a follow because one of us had to follow, and I had more experience in terms of arms, and balletic, you know…We danced in the Gay Games in Amsterdam. And it was so overwhelming in terms of the sheer numbers of people doing it, and the whole thing about gay people participating. People from Africa, people from Uzbekistan where at that time the punishment for being gay was to be beheaded. So, at that time, there were several countries…people coming from those countries, dancing in a same sex partnership. If they had been found out from their country [Makes a gesture and a noise to indicate beheading]. So, that to me is quite overwhelming and a big big moment of wanting to create a worldwide situation where same sex dancing could be accepted in various different countries. And it had started building up. Nineteen years ago we started… a competition called the [name of] Trophy, and it's an invitation to couples from all over the world to compete in a same sex dance competition. There's levels A, B, C and D. And only about a quarter of the participants are from the UK. We've had people from Australia, people from America…And last year we had a couple from Italy. In Italy you would NOT get to see women dancing together. It's absolutely not allowed. And Poland is absolutely not…And we had a couple from Russia.

DW: And it's here in London?

J: It's the third weekend in February, and I'm the organizer along with [my partner]. And we do it every year to celebrate the birth of the Pink Jukebox. And it's a lot of organization, and it costs 7000 pounds to put it on, and we get the money back through entry money. However, there's a big issue going on at the moment because the BDC, which is the British Dance Council, is having problems…with the rule to say that same sex couples cannot enter a mixed sex dance competition. They're trying to establish a rule that says that a partnership has to be a man and a woman. And there's been an issue about that. If…I can't go too much into it because it is too complicated, but basically, if the ruling gets beaten, it means that same sex dancers would be able to go and dance in the mainstream. However, as the Pink Jukebox trophy, we could be open to prosecution if we don't allow mixed sex couples to dance in our competition. So, it's a bid issue going on at the moment that could effect our ability to run a same sex dance competition.

DW: That's a whole other research area…

J: There are several people who have done research on it and there's a link on a radio station that will bring you all up to date…Just recently. So, back to me.

DW: So, how did you meet your partner? And did she dance before?

J: My current life partner to which I'm civil partnered, and are considering marriage, we'll see, was in the cast already when I came to join it in the late '80s...beginning of the '90s. I didn't really notice her at all, she was just one of the people in the cast – as you do. We had a distinct moment when we met, in the middle of a dance competition – doing a tango. So, this is another important moment for me in that it was the very first same sex dance competition, and it was very small – for maybe beginner people. And the prize was a weekend in Blackpool for the International Dance Championships. So, there was this competition and there weren't very many people in it, and the guy who was organising it came round and said to us…because it was on a regular night, a dance club night, 'We haven't got enough couples. Could you please come on the dance floor and take part in the competition? It's not serious. Just for fun…'. Anyway, I just happened to be sitting next to [her], and we looked at each other and said, 'Oh come on. Let's do it' sort of thing'. We didn't have an attraction thing going on much. And then we did the waltz and we did the quick step, and then the said, right, it's the tango. Well neither had done much tango, and we both were leaders. All we could do literally was walk, walk, rock, rock, rock. That's all we could do. So, she said, 'We'd better sort of do something to make it more interesting'. She draped herself over me, looked straight in my eyes, and I thought, 'Oh! This woman is really lovely'. And everyone's cheering, and I had a number on my back, and that was the moment we fell in love. (laughing)

DW: That's a good story!

J: So…we hadn't really noticed each other before that, but we had to kind of do something. And actually there was a couple who was doing all sorts of intricate Argentine tango movements, but because we did it with a bit of passion, we won the competition! (laughing) And, our first date was the weekend in Blackpool. (Tapping hands to heart and smiling)

DW: Well, I think the fact that you won it as well.

J: It was interesting because…the audience or whoever was judging, was seeing that the connection was more important than all of the complicated steps. And that's really what I think dancing brings. It's a particular way of connecting, which is not necessarily sexual, but could contain some sexual energy. But it's a safe way to play.

DW: So what did your friends and family think about your new world and life in dance?

J: My family…I don't have much family actually. But …I guess my…I don't know anybody else really. I don't think my mother would have been surprised at the relationship with dance because she knew that I was very musical and she would be more shocked that I had come out as a lesbian…But I think that my family were really my friends that I came out to. A lot of them…you know really…I mean, I came out at a time when you had to be quite butch. There weren't really any lipstick lesbians around in those days. It was very much…yeah, it wasn't a showy offy sort of… In those days, dancing was like (shrugging shoulders and making a face). But that's why in the dance world, the men used to be very strong. And that's why they had separate competitions because the women often had not…Their experience of dancing was absolutely zilch like mine, and they'd come to it as an adult like me. Whereas the men, they'd had some kind of experience of dancing as a child. So, when the competitions sort of got going, in all different countries – Berlin, Germany, we go all of the place to compete.

DW: And how many competitions do you go to in a year?

J: The only reason we travel, is that there is only one competition in the UK. And that's mine. Ok? There have been two – another couple started a competition in Blackpool. For the last three years there have been a couple of competitions, but last year there was only one. This year there is only one. Therefore, if same sex couples want to gain experience, they have to travel. Because they are not allowed to compete in mixed sex dance competitions. Some do…I can't go into that now, but there is a whole issue with judges not marking same sex couples…There's a lot of tolerance, but there's also a lot of prejudice. So they have a bit of a hard time in that world. So basically, we go about four time a year? Four or five times a year to different cities because there is this connection all across the world between the same sex dance community.

DW: Now I'm really curious about this.

J: There's a connection with New York, with Sydney, Australia. There's a whole film that was made about same sex dancing in Sydney, Australia…And it was entered in the British Film Institute Festival two or three years ago…But, for example next week, is the Euro Games which is not just dancing, it's hockey, football, and everything. And there's about forty of us going from this country to compete in Stockholm…it's a four-day competition. And I'm in a formation team called the Pink Dancers and I've been in that for twenty years.

DW: What is a formation team?

J: It's like a…It's a group of people who make patterns on the floor. But again, the difference is…have you ever seen a formation team before?

DW: I think I know what you are talking about.

J: Well then, to make a long story short, they make a line and (she does a series of hand gestures to indicate formation patterning). But, the men always lead, and the women always follow, and they don't change partners. Our formation team is the only one in the world that's mixed, that's men and women, and we change partners, and then we go with another partner, and then we make a pattern, and then we get another partner, and then we switch and the women lead and the men follow. So, we are a unique team. As far as I know we are the only mixed, same sex formation team that there is in the world. As far as I know…But there is a crack team that we are going to be competing with called the Swinging Sisters from Germany. But again, they don't switch partners – they stay with the same partners, and make all of their patterns…But here again, they don't do what we do.

DW: So, it seems that most of the realm of dance that you are in is Ballroom and Latin.

J: Yes, definitely.

DW: Since you started doing that have you branched out into any other forms?

J: No…because I'm still not very good at it! (Laughing) And I suppose it's like any dance, there's a form of dance that you [connect with]… I have gone back to tap dancing just in this last year. I've gone back to the same – to the original teacher, that taught me tap dancing, and she's started teaching a class, we're all over sixty, well I'm going to be. And the participants are the same people that danced in our mid-twenties and we've come back together and re-formed. So, that's interesting for your point of view I think.

And I'll tell you a little story…I've been in Cabaret twice – the show. And once I did it probably in my late twenties, and with this particular operatic society. Chingford Dramatic and Operatic Society. And I was tap dancing with the girls – stage dancing. So, that would have been…age 28. When I was 48, twenty years later, maybe slightly later, I can't quite remember exactly, but at least twenty years later, I went back and did Cabaret again. Now hang on, it must have been more years than that because all the people who were in the group then were the daughters of who had been in it originally. And I did the show again, I played the oldest Kit Kat Club girl or whatever, and at least four of the women who were in the kick line with me, were the daughters of the women who had done the original play with me. That's kind of interesting isn't it. (laughing) And I just thought it was quite funny that it bridges all the age groups so…And particularly ballroom dancers…other types of dance like ballet are more age related. But in Ballroom and Latin you have a 14 year old dancing with a 50, 60, or 70 year old and it happens a lot. Because the – because the same sex world is so genderless and so free, you do get a lot of mixtures. Just for fun you know…They'll be a sort of 22 year old…he'll be taking turns of dancing with all sorts of different people, whatever age they are. I'll go around with him, or he'll have another girl who is 22 or something. It's like, who cares how old you are. Just dance.

DW: What do you think it was about dance that captured you in a way that was different than say something else in your life - say gardening? What do you think it was that was in particular about dance?

J: I think it's exciting to be connecting with someone, and not necessarily having to make a date with them each week. There's a sort of…You know, if you…say you and I were to become friends later on, I mean there would be some kind of expectation that you'd…well when are we going to see each other next. And then you might get into the thing, well I want to see you more than you want to see me. You might be a very busy person and I might be a very needy person. And then you get a certain dynamic, 'She's always busy'…you know, all these different things…You see, I don't know about the straight world, I think there are a lot more problems like that. I'm not sure, but from what I hear, there's all sorts of jealousies and things that go on because of the traditional 'thing' of the men can ask the women to dance, but the women can't ask the men to dance. So therefore, you get these women, 'Well

she's have five dances, while I've only had three dances', so that kind of comes into it a little bit more. While in my world…that kind of thing doesn't enter it. Because if you are a woman and you are fed up with wanting to have a dance, you just look around and…people are more...Well, I think it's encouraged by myself and my…people are encouraged to be very generous. So, say you've been dancing for four months. You only know a few steps, but somebody new comes through the door. You're honour bound to ask them to dance, to bring them into the world. Because we want everyone who comes in to have a happy time, and feel accepted and part of the crowd. Therefore, when they've been dancing for a couple of months, and someone new comes through the door, they'll do the same. So, there's sort of that expectation that regardless of whether people are black, white, young, old, disabled, smelly, you know. There are issues with people? No, you go and ask them to dance. And because of the lead and follow thing, the manners thing doesn't come into it. There's no – anyone can ask anyone. You'll notice…that unless people are wanting to sit and chat, because if everybody wanted to dance there would be no room on the dance floor…there are between 200 and 300 people coming every first Saturday of the month for 20 years, not much has changed. Anyone who wants to dance can dance.

DW: And beginners are welcome?

J: Yes! Beginners are totally welcome! If you came out and you sat with your arms crossed like this (crosses arms in front of chest) then you probably wouldn't get a dance. If you are open to having a go, then you would…As the DJ I would spot that you were new, and I've had a quick word with somebody. I'd say, 'Look there is a woman who is new, go and ask her to dance'. And they would go, 'Oh alright'. And before you know it, once people see you're up for it, then other people would ask you. Or you could ask them! I'm a total beginner, you know, you might be a bit shy to begin with, but you would just say, 'I really don't know how to do this dance, would you show me?'. It's a generous spirited place.

DW: It's very different than say…I mean I'm talking to a lot of people who are doing social dancing, and for example, I spoke to a woman who is doing Swing and Lindy, and one of the things that she talked about was having to achieve a certain level – and actually I've heard this quite a lot – for feeling like you could go to a social…or that people would ask them to dance, or that people who are of a certain level would want to dance with people who are not at that level.

J: I think that does come when couples become competitive couples. When couples dance Sport, because then you are really serious…And there are couples who have got together, they are not necessarily life couples, they are couples who have decided that they really…you know it's like taking an exam, so therefore when they come dancing they only dance with that person…So they're not, they are in a little separate zone. And there will be a lot of those this weekend because everyone is going off to Stockholm and they want to practice their competition. And sometimes I have to control the environment as the DJ. And I have to say, 'Right. Competitive dancers, this one is not for you, this one is a social dance'. But usually they are very good, and they are not bumping into people…But, just very occasionally I have to do something about it.

DW: What does dance mean to you?

J: Everything. If I couldn't dance, like at the moment I have an ankle injury, and I am definitely going to be able to do the formation team dance because nobody is really looking closely at everybody's feet. But I may be able to go all the way to Stockholm and not be able to compete. I don't know. I've had an injury about four weeks now and it's just…it's a strain injury. It's an overuse injury. If I maybe rest it, I'm sure it will get better. But whether it will get better in time for dancing in Stockholm I don't know. But if I can't dance in Stockholm, I will take pleasure in seeing all of the other people dancing. But, it's very much…krickey…if I wasn't in the dance world, and I wasn't moving, I guess I'd probably do music…I mean I'd probably DJ and watch. I mean I can't imagine a world and not being involved in dancing. And that's really strange actually, from somebody who didn't dance at all. So, hmm. It's how I spend time with my partner. Nine times out of ten we are going off to practice, or we are going off to this or to do that. The other thing that we do together is probably watch films, or…the majority of the time its dance connected. I think if I couldn't dance I would find some other thing. Some other…something. I'm a very social person so I would have to engulf myself. I'd probably do bowls or something. I'd be doing something with a big group of people. I'm that kind of person.

DW: Do you consider yourself a dancer? Do you give yourself that title?

J: Yes. Yeah.

DW: Last question. If you had to finish the sentence, the first part being 'I dance…' how would you finish that?

J: I dance for fun. I do compete, but that's not the real…I meet lots of people in different countries. I don't care if I've won to be honest, nine times out of ten we come bottom. We're the oldest on the floor apart from two other people. And we aren't very good! (laughing) But apart from that, yeah…for fun. I do it for fun.

DW: I just wanted to…you mentioned at the start that you bring people to dance.

J: Definitely.

DW: In which part of your…what it is you've talked about – where does that fit in.

J: Well it comes into the [Name of Club] because every week we have people come who have never danced before. EVERY week. And we scoop them up. If they are really uncoordinated, and it takes more than three or four times for them to put their feet in the right place, I take them out for class. I take them to the side and we do something. And it's very important to me that they go away feeling like they've achieved something. Only twice have people run off and been scared off. But they've come back. They've come back.

DW: Then your record's clean!

J: Yeah! And the other thing is, I started from scratch so everybody…Some people have danced as kids, but I tend to attract people in their 60's and 70's because that's my age group, and it can be done either low impact or high impact. So, I have a few 50 year olds, but mainly their 60. And quite a lot of them have never done any dance at all in their lives. And so, they are starting at age 60. And because [Name of fitness programme] is so simple and it's about copying and repetition, it's about repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. And then eventually, I always say to people, 'Ok. You may take four or five times of coming to the class. Don't worry if you go four or five directions…enjoy yourself. If you can't do the step, don't just stand there trying to pick it up, make something up. Do your own step. So, I love it because I've got people doing Paso double steps now who came a year ago not…who really couldn't coordinate themselves at all. And because they have repeated… repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat…I am one who believes that tone deaf singers can sing, and that uncoordinated dancers can learn to dance. Yeah… (laughing)

Name: Laina
Age: 41
Place of Birth: Ohio
Place of Residence: Baltimore, Maryland
Interviewed: Skype/ 16 July, 2015

DW: Tell me anything about your life outside of dance.

L: Well, I'm a professional performing classical musician. And I have a busy and varied career that keeps me busy and that I enjoy very much. I'm not sure what else to say about my life outside of dance. That makes it sound like my life is dance, which it isn't.

DW: No. You're a professional performing pianist.

L: Yeah.

DW: Is there anything else? Alright, so let's move to dance then. Did you dance very much when you were younger?

L: I did not…I was a gymnast when I probably age 11 – 15, and they made us take ballet for a portion of the training, and we dutifully hated it (laughing) because we all just wanted to tumble. But actually, they events that I enjoyed the most of the four events that women/girls do… the vault and the bars were not my favourite. It was the beam and the floor. And I believe it was because that was where there was an opportunity for expression through movement.

DW: Ok. So, after you finished with gymnastics, how was dance a part of your life – or not?

L: Not at all until I was in graduate school…I was in a challenged relationship, and somebody suggested that we find something to do together and I signed us up for a package of ballroom dance lessons for ten weeks at Arthur Murray.

DW: Why did you choose that?

L: Ballroom? Because it was partner dancing. And I probably deep down, just wanted to take ballroom dancing. (laughing) So we had one lesson together and then the shit hit the fan and our relationship ended – we broke up. And I was left with these nine lessons which I took and by the end of them I was

completely hooked. And it reminded me a lot of my gymnastics days and how fun it was to move to music.

DW: So, you kind of answered the question there…What else was it about it that got you completely hooked? (Long pause from LJ) What did you like about it?

L: Well I've always had a very strong physical response to music. So, when I played the piano when I was younger, and had fewer filters or was less channelled artistically, I moved around a lot at the keyboard. And teachers used to talk to me about it like, 'this is distracting, and this is getting on your way that you are moving so much in extraneous ways. Unnecessary ways'. And I think essentially I was trying to dance. I was worried…I knew at the time as a 14-year-old that I didn't have the technique to produce the sound I wanted. And it was unforgivable and unthinkable to me not to have the listener experience the music – fully. So, I felt that I needed to add a visual component to help round out the lack that I was providing in my sound.

So, back to the ballroom dancing. I don't know that I can say anymore than that it was a joy to move once again to music. To be allowed and encouraged. For it to be ok for me to move to music. Which I had always wanted to do anyway.

DW: Alright. So, you took these nine lessons, and you liked it.

L: I did!

DW: What happened next?

L: I signed up for another ten [lessons], and then I had a switch of teachers because my teacher became unavailable, and a switch of studios. This was all happening in Houston. And by the second year of grad school I was taking two lessons a week and was signed up for my first competition. Bronze level syllabus, American Rhythm and Smooth. And I just loved it! And at the end of my second year, I actually also signed up for an adult jazz dance class, and we did this fantastic tacky number to Prince 1999 (laughing) in 1999. It was fantastic! It was a huge thrill for me! And then I moved to Baltimore and I immediately sought out places to dance in Baltimore. I got hooked up with a professional who was looking for someone who he might be able to train into some kind of a partner. So, that was a little bit sketchy, but I worked with him for a while, then things got a little weird. And then I found an amateur partner and we started taking lessons together. We started taking International [ballroom] mostly Smooth. International Standard…And that partner got injured at some point but we did a few competitions together.

And then I went on a hiatus when I met [my former husband]… No, it wasn't when I met [him], it was when [he] moved to Baltimore to live with me. He was not a dancer and had always been threatened by my forays onto the dance floor. Because he couldn't understand that you weren't just incredibly attracted to every partner that you danced with. So, he didn't get…It was very threatening to him. So, I gave it up. So, I tried a little – I'll teach you some fox trot and we can go to the Hollywood Ballroom and try a couple of dances. And we would do a couple of dances but then he would watch me dance with other men and that was just not good. So, between 2003 and 2008 I gave up my dancing because it was painful for him.

DW: But how did feel about that?

L: Well…he actually catered an event at a ballroom that I used to go to regularly. It's about 15 minutes from my house. It's where we got married.

DW: Oh Yeah! I was there!

L: He catered an event there two years running, maybe three years running called the The Nutcracker Ball which was at the holiday time in December. And I was like the sous chef, dishwasher, cart-er of things. And I'm walking into the ballroom – back and forth between the kitchen and the ballroom – and I see these people that I recognize. It literally hurt me. It was physically hurtful to be in that environment and not be a part of it anymore. It was so painful. And I remember one year. Maybe the second year and we were close to the end, and I was like, 'are we good back here in the kitchen?', and I sneaked out front, and I grabbed a friend and I was like, 'Can we dance?', and got one or two dances in. It was literally painful. So, the VERY first thing that I did when we split up in 2008 was go dancing. And immediately the first thing I discovered was West Coast Swing.

I went out dancing with a friend who was like, 'Have you tried West Coast? You should come to this West Coast event'. And basically, ever since that night I never really went back to ballroom. West Coast Swing was so much more what I was looking for. So, that's now what I do exclusively.

DW: Alright. We'll get to that…but I just want to fill in some details. So, when you say second year of grad school, how old were you? And what year was that? Do you remember?

L: (Pause to think) It was '99-2000, and in 1999 I turned 26.

DW: Ok. So, when you took the ballroom classes and you also took the jazz class, and then you moved to Baltimore. When you moved to Baltimore how often were you going dancing?

L: I don't know. Probably like twice a week? And then when I met that guy who wanted to train me as a partner it was probably more. More like three times a week. And then when [my former husband] moved to Baltimore in 2003 it curtailed suddenly…

DW: I think that's really interesting about what you were saying about sneaking out and grabbing someone. It's almost like you had to have this secret.

L: We talked about reconciling in 2011 after some years had passed. We started spending some time together and tried to get together again. And there was as dance that I go to – there was another dance that I was doing at the time called the Hustle. And the best hustle dancing is in Philadelphia, and I have a lot of really really dear friends. I mean like, I go to this dance which is in Philadelphia, which is two hours away from where I live, and I walk in the door and everyone's like, 'Oh my God Laina's here!'. And everybody wants to talk to me and everybody wants to give me a hug, and everybody wants to dance with me. And it's like, I feel so loved when I go there.

And so, at some point in this reconciling process with [my former husband], I shared with him that it was Wednesday night and I was going to go to Philadelphia, and I frequently did at that time when I didn't have anything Thursday morning. So, I would go to the dance until about 12:00 or maybe 1:00, and then I would power home two hours in the car, or maybe get a hotel or stay at a friend's. And I remember him saying, 'You're going three states away to go dancing?...Because it's Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania'…And there was so much judgement that I would go THREE STATES AWAY just to go dancing. And it's just not dancing. It's friends, it's community, it's feeling welcomed and loved, feeling accepted. So, that Philadelphia dance is not really a part of my life anymore because I gravitated away from Hustle, but I still love those people.

DW: Talk we'll about people a little bit, and then we will go back into West Coast Swing. So, you came to Baltimore…what was it besides your own personal feelings that gave you the feeling of like to dance…but what kind of a community did you form from that?

L: Well, I'd like to talk about the community that I have now.

DW: Ok. That's fine.

L: It's a little hard to remember that sense of community I had when I first came. But now, there's a community of dancers, West Coast Swing dancers, mostly in Washington. Most of the dancing is on the DC beltway, so that means at least 45 minutes [travel] for me to go to a dance – between 45 minutes to an hour. And I would say 4 nights a week at this point, there is a dance that I can walk into and have a room full of people who know who I am by name, first and last, know what I do, ask me about my injured pinkie…Let's just say that, for me, dance had not only become an arena for me to improve at something, which is something I really enjoy, it's social, it's community, it's active, its exercise, and it's moving to music, and it puts me in touch with an enormous cross-section of people. I know people who are plumbers, electricians, professional poker players, actresses, CEO's, dishwashers. It's such a cross-section of life. And it really meets a lot of needs. Just beyond the dancing itself.

DW: Alright, backing up a bit to fill in some gaps. So you discovered West Coast Swing.

L: Do you know what that is?

DW: Yes I do!

L: Yeah, it can be a cliquey, but only because it is the best dance there is! (laughing)

DW: And why is that?

L: I'll tell you why! Because, (pause) it is so open to expression. It is so open to you putting on it whatever you want to. And what I love about it from my perspective, it feels like chamber music to me, because it's not really just a duo between you and your dance partner, it's a trio between you and your dance partner and a song. And if you hear something in the song that you want to accent with your body, and your partner hears it too and does it too, and it's this unspoken synthesis of ideas (pause) that is intoxicating. It has so much variety, it has such a vast tempo range, that you can dance to. And basically, there's so much diversity and so much improvisation, that you can do one dance all weekend long at a convention and not get bored. And you frequently do. I go to a lot of these things where you go for the weekend and there's competition all day long, and there's social dancing all night long – literally all night long.

It's a big party atmosphere I have to say. I mean there's a lot of drinking in the West Coast community. It's a very "adult" scene, and people put a premium on late night dancing because you get tired, and then you have some drinks, and your inhibitions go away. And so the dancing gets more and more real. And other things happen to which are sometimes unfortunate. Sometimes people…people extending themselves past where they should, and some childish behaviour happens to. But it is true that dancing past your inhibition level is pretty great! (laughing) It's pretty great…

DW: So, with West Coast Swing you were...

L: Hooked! Big time!

DW: So how often were you dancing?

L: Well, right when [my former husband] and I broke up, so 2008 – 10, not only would I have been dancing anyway three or four nights a week, but I also started dating somebody immediately who was in the community. So, that was a further incentive. And actually, I haven't had a relationship since then, with a non-dancer. I think that, there is almost an understanding that, to be a dancer…We call people who aren't dancers "civilians". (Laughing) Because it's like [my former husband], they think that we're imagining that we are going to have sex with every partner that we have. And when you get past your inhibition level, it's not about that. It's kind of like…I mean, sometimes it is sexy. But it's kind of like having a sexy dream where you play out things that aren't going to happen in real-life. And that fine. And honestly dancing and sex are not about the same thing. Dancing and sex are not the same thing. But unfortunately, a lot of civilians do not understand this, and you know, you run into a lot of problems where you have to justify your own – life! You know, just date a dancer and they'll understand. And sometimes even dancers get jealous. Like, 'How come you danced like that with him and not with me?' Well, because that's what he brings out of me. Or that's what the song brought out of me. Get over it! I'm a complex person with a lot of stuff that I want to express. I'm a highly expressive person.

DW: It's interesting because I've talked to several people who are like, 'I can't date anyone who isn't a dancer now'.

DW: Ok, so West Coast Swing, many nights a week. When did you start doing…you talked about doing competitions?

L: I do! Pretty much right away, I'm trying to think…My first competition was May of 2009, and I found West Coast Swing late in the summer of 2008. Yeah, so pretty much right away.

DW: And during this time were you just doing West Coast Swing? After you found it were you like, 'This is my dance!', or were you still doing other forms?

L: When I found West Coast Swing it was like…here's the thing, ballroom is fun, but ballroom is all about syllabus. When you watch a routine, those people do the same routine no matter which rumba it is. And now that I know West Coast Swing which is so based on the music, which is what I do for a living – I'm a musician! This dance is based on what is happening in the music. Are you showing it? Yes or no? So to go back to ballroom where they could play five million rumbas and they would do the same thing, to me it's like pantomime…I studied ballroom long enough, especially International Standard, it's kind of like learning Beethoven. Have you ever taken International Standard?

DW: No.

L: Cause it's so subtle, and so nuanced, and your hand has to be in his hand just like this. And you know the stretch – it's so hard. And at some point I was just like, I don't have time for another Beethoven, I have Beethoven already. And West Coast is a street dance, and so on one level it's a lot less demanding, because it's more free. And my problem with dancing socially was, it's hard to do ballroom socially. So, once I found West Coast, I was like wow, this is the only dance for me! And occasionally they will play a waltz at our West Coast dance, and I will grab Rick and we'll do a waltz…But it doesn't scratch the same itch.

DW: When you go to a West Coast Swing evening, do you go with one person? Or do you have lots of people and you switch it up? For the competition, do you prepare with one person? Or how does that work?

LJ: Well as far as social dancing, you go alone and all your friends are there. So, there's no problem with - will I know anybody at the dance? I know fifty people by first and last name, profession and phone number. As far as competitions, there are a lot of different ways to compete. One is called Jack and Jill, and it's the most popular…You just throw your hat into the ring as either a leader or a follower and you get a random partner, and a random song…and whatever happens, happens. There's no preparation.

Then there's Strictly. Strictly is where you choose your partner ahead of time, cause you find somebody…Often, when you go to the convention, and it's Thursday night and you're dancing, and you're like, 'Wow! This guy feels really really good', and your like, 'Hey, what level do you dance in? Do you want to do a Strictly?'. 'Well I'm in advanced. Well I'm in intermediate. Oh well never mind'. Or, 'Yeah! We're both in advanced!'…So that's Strictly. You still get a random song, and it's still about lead and follow in the heat of the moment, but you at least get to choose your partner ahead of time.

Then there's Choreography. That's where I find my heart and soul in Choreography. You think about what I do for a living, it's taking a text, and like, expressing it as fully as possible. And Choreography is like learning every move, and then making it as authentic as possible. So, that's obviously where you know your partner, your song, and every movement ahead of time, and it's a total performance. So, there's something for everyone.

DW: And so how often do you do competitions?

L: Twelve to fifteen a year.

DW: Oh my gosh! That's a lot!

L: I do more now that I have a choreography routine with a professional teacher – so the Pro/Am…And I have to pay him for it, like every second of practice and every performance. But he is a fucking champion. He is like, one of the top guys and he's doing a routine with me. And I picked the song, and he choreographed it with his partner. It is beautiful…It's *so* one of my most thrilling experiences. And every single time that I watch one of our videos of us competing the routine, I get to the end and I have this huge smile on my face. It is such an honour. So now that I have this routine, there's an incentive to go to more events, so that I can compete this routine.

I'm also just embarking now on a routine with a fellow amateur, so that means we enter the Rising Star division, which is kind of a… whatever, kind of a big deal. So, we're debuting our routine at the end of July, and I'm super excited. Oh my God. I love my partner. He's great! We're totally on the same page as far as money, and commitment, and time, and showing up, and practicing hard. I just love him, he's great.

DW: I mean that's something that I am always amazed at…it costs a lot of money to have dance as your hobby.

L: It does. Well, ballroom is super expensive. That's actually what I hate about ballroom. Because if you want to do a competition, not only do you have to pay your teacher lots of money per hour, but there's this huge dress that you have to buy – studded with crystals, that costs upwards of a thousand dollars. And they look down on you if you use the same dress more than once. It's like, made for rich retired ladies whose husbands have died. It really sucks for people who are…normal people. But West Coast, if you want to compete in a Jack and Jill or a Strictly, you just wear black pants and a pretty top, and you put on lots of makeup, and do you hair really nice, and you're good! And for competition, if you're doing Choreography, I take a pair of Black House/White Market black slacks and put a strip of sparkly down the side, and just make sure the colours match and it's good. It's like real people.

DW: What do your friends and family, outside of dance, think about your love of dancing?

L: (long pause) I don't know! I think that when I first got into it hard-core which was 2008, I would send my family updates and pictures and videos – just really excited e-mails about everything I was experiencing. They've all been really supportive. I don't really know what they think, but I know that they know that I love it. And they know it's a social outlet as well as an expressive outlet, and an exercise outlet. You know, it's a place to be for me. So, I think they are fully supportive.

My mom is so cute. There is this one event that I go to in Ohio, there's one at Thanksgiving and one at New Years that I frequently go to because then I can see her, and then go to the event. And so she's so cute, she's come for New Year's Eve at Spotlight New Year's, and she'll be there to watch me dance and watch me compete. One of my friends posted, 'Top ten reasons that you should attend Cash Bash', which is this event in North-eastern Ohio at Thanksgiving. And I think number five on the list was, 'Laina's mom will be there!' (laughing) It was so cute and I think it totally made her day. Laina's mom will be there to cheer you on. So cute.

DW: Part of what I am interested in is this idea of significance or transformation. And some people talk about having a very distinct moment where they knew that being and participating in dance was where they wanted to be. And some people talk about this transformation being something that is longer term over a many year(s) period. Have you had either of those experiences? Some people talk about this 'Aha!' moment…and some people are like, it was over a long period of time.

L: I don't think it was an 'Aha!" for me, but I do think that by ballroom dance lesson number three in 1999…I was like, 'dude'. I mean I changed my style of

dress that I looked for. Style of clothing…based on an exposure to a different world. And I mean, it's not like I walk around looking like a Latin dancer all the time…it was kind of like my coming of age from being a graduate student with a ponytail, a t-shirt, and mom jeans. To like, 'Oh! I have a shape! Oh! This looks good on my shape. That doesn't look good on my shape'. My ballroom dance teacher was extremely sexy, and was very intimidating. Extremely intimidating! I remember showing up in overalls for one of my dance lessons, and there was this room full of mirrors. Mirrors everywhere and at every angle. And I was like, 'Why am I wearing overalls!', never again. So, I don't think it was an 'aha!' moment, and I don't recall it. But I would probably say there have been several, because I have come to dance and left it, and come to it again as a grad student, and come to it again in 2008 as a newly single person and never left it. And I will never leave it.

DW: Is there anything that you don't like?

L: I don't like that the better I get and the more I work on my own dancing, the harder it is to find people that I enjoy dancing with. As I elevate my own level, other people become…and it's terrible because I don't want it to be. I remember being a beginner and stinking and it was hard, and I was grateful for everyone who was willing to dance with me. But its tough dividing your time at a social dance when you show up at 9:30 and you're going to be there 'till 12:00. How many dances do you give to those, 'Oh man. This is not going to be fun for me, this will be fun for them'. So, that's hard.

DW: But somebody did it for you.

L: Yes! That's totally true. Totally true. And I guess I would also say it's hard when the music is uninspiring. Because my dance form is so based on the response to the music that if I don't like what I'm listening to, it's tough to have a good dance.

DW: So right now you are dancing around DC, and you talked about going to Ohio, what other places do you go to dance?

L: I go regularly to an event in Boston in August. Well, let me tell you about my Fall because now I have two routines. I've been doing my routine with the professional for almost two years, but I was injured for eight months of it so couldn't dance. So, I'm gearing up to do it as many times as possible, and retire it at the biggest event of our competition circuit, which is the US Open. I'm going to do my routine with Greggy-Bear as often as possible.

So, Boston in August, St Louis in September, Philadelphia in October, DC in November, and the US Open is Thanksgiving weekend in Los Angeles. And I will be there giving my routine that I adore, and that is the hugest thrill for me. I will give it its retirement routine at Thanksgiving, at the biggest event that we have. And I really think it would be cool if I could place. That would be super exciting.

DW: And then are you going to have a new one choreographed?

L: And then I'll let my amateur, amateur routine take over after that. Because we are going to do our amateur routine at some of the same events. He might do the US Open too…he's willing to go to California to do our routine there. So, after the Pro/Am routine is over I'll focus on my routine with Corey for probably a year or more starting this July. So, we'll coordinate as many events as possible that we are both going to, and practice and be prepared, and do our routine. Sometime you win cash, sometimes you don't…It's not about the money for me, it's about the thrill of…the thrill of dance.

DW: So do you consider yourself a dancer? Do you give yourself that title or identity?

L: (right away) Yes! Yes I do!

DW: If you had to finish the sentence, the first two words being 'I dance…', what would you say?

L: (long pause) Good question. It's so open ended. (sigh and long pause) Um… (long pause) I dance…hmmm (pause) Ok, well I'm going to go with, I dance because it brings me joy.

DW: What does dance mean to you?

L: Dance means freedom, expression, creativity, exercise, friendship, and community.

DW: So why dance and not something else? What was it about dance, instead of gardening?

L: (Laughing) Well I like gardening too!

DW: But I bet you spend a lot less time gardening than you do dancing.

L: Well yeah. But there's no music, there's nobody else there, there's no technique, there's no interaction. Dance is interaction. Now I say that as a social dancer, a partner dancer. You can obviously dance contemporary by yourself, you don't need any interaction. I would never do that. I kind of feel bad that I didn't speak about what I do for a living with the same kind of animation.

DW: But you don't have to. That's not the point.

L: But I feel weird…because I love what I do.

DW: But here's the point, you did before we started the interview, and I did make a note that your body language was very much the same as when you were talking about the Brahms competition, as it was when you were talking about dancing. And your facial expressions were really really similar.

L: That's good.

DW: And also, you talked about it because you talked about the music when you are dancing. If I had wanted more on that I would have asked you more on that.

L: It's super fascinating! I plan to post on Facebook my experience of doing this interview because…it's so fun to have somebody be interested in having someone interested in me talking about dancing. I think it's great!

DW: I actually had a bit of a hard time getting people to talk to me because they said that their experiences were really quite intimate, and they were a bit shy.

I'll just tell you this, I don't know if it will figure into your research, but for a long time…It's customary as a professional classical musician to put a line in at the end [of a bio] that says, 'Laina likes to cook and is a part of a knitting circle, and enjoys spending time with her husband and her dog'. And I've resisted saying anything about dance until about a year ago, because I was worried that the classical community would judge me as being less serious as a classical musician somehow…So I kept all of that out of my bio. And about a year ago I redid my website and I put a line in my bio at the end, 'Laina is an avid competitive and social West Coast Swing dancer, and frequently (laughing) as soon as the concert is over she makes a bee line for the dance

floor'. And people liked knowing that about me. And I think that I now feel secure in my own artistry and my own confidence as a musician, I don't really care anymore if anyone wants to say that I'm not serious. Because I know that I've done my work.

DW: I was going to say, I think you're pretty established now.

L: So now I can admit that I am an avid social West Coast Swing dancer.

DW: See that to me is really interesting that you think it would be taken seriously, because this is the thing that you are as passionate about as your music.

L: I guess so.

DW: Did you tell people? I know you didn't put it into what was written, but did you tell your fellow musicians that you did this?

LJ: Yeah. They knew. But I didn't broadcast it. Anybody who knew me…I'm a sharer. Anybody who knows me knows that I share who I am – authentically with other people. So, if anybody asks me, 'Hey, what are you doing this weekend?', casually at a BSO rehearsal, if I have a dance competition I'm going to tell them. Although I might be worrying that they are probably thinking, 'Shouldn't she be practicing for the concert?' Nope! (laughing) Got it down!

DW: Thank you for your time today.

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